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M.A. ENGLISH (SECOND SEMESTER)

American Literature

(From the Academic Year 2023 onwards)

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AMERICAN LITERATURE II

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Text Book: 1. Willis Wagner: American Literature - A World View

Ref. Books:1. Marcus Cunliffe: Sphere History of Literature - American Literature to 1900.

2. Boris Ford: The New Pelican Guide to English Literature - Vol.9. American Literature.

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Unit – I: Poetry

Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking – Walt Whitman

Poem

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the child leaving his bed wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
Down from the shower'd halo,
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if they were alive,
Out from the patches of briers and blackberries,
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,
From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and fallings I heard,
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen as if with tears,
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the mist,
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,
From the myriad thence-arous'd words,
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was growing,
Up this seashore in some briers,
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,

And every day the she-bird crouch’d on her nest, silent, with bright eyes,
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturbing them,
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

Shine! shine! shine!
Pour down your warmth, great sun!
While we bask, we two together.

Two together!
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together.

Till of a sudden,
May-be kill’d, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouch’d not on the nest,
Nor return’d that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appear’d again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama.

Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok’s shore;
I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.

Yes, when the stars glisten’d,

All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,
Down almost amid the slapping waves,
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.

Yes my brother I know,
The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,
For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the shadows,
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and sights after their sorts,
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,
Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,
Following you my brother.

Soothe! soothe! soothe!
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,
And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one close,
But my love soothes not me, not me.

Low hangs the moon, it rose late,
It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.

O madly the sea pushes upon the land,
With love, with love.

O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the breakers?
What is that little black thing I see there in the white?

Loud! loud! loud!

Loud I call to you, my love!

High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,
Surely you must know who is here, is here,
You must know who I am, my love.

Low-hanging moon!
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!
O moon do not keep her from me any longer.

Land! land! O land!
Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate back again if you only would,
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.

O rising stars!
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some of you.

O throat! O trembling throat!
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!
Pierce the woods, the earth,
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.

Shake out carols!
Solitary here, the night's carols!
Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!
O under that moon where she droops almost down into the sea!
O reckless despairing carols.

But soft! sink low!
Soft! let me just murmur,
And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,

So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,
But not altogether still, for then she might not come immediately to me.

Hither my love!
Here I am! here!
With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you,
This gentle call is for you my love, for you.

Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,
That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,
Those are the shadows of leaves.

O darkness! O in vain!
O I am very sick and sorrowful.

O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the sea!
O troubled reflection in the sea!
O throat! O throbbing heart!
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.

O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!
In the air, in the woods, over fields,
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!
But my mate no more, no more with me!
We two together no more.

The aria sinking,
All else continuing, the stars shining,
The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,
With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,
On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling,
The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the face of the sea almost touching,
The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the atmosphere dallying,

The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last tumultuously bursting,
The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,
The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,
The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering,
The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,
To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd secret hissing,
To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul,)
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me?
For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard you,
Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,
And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer, louder and more sorrowful than yours,
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me,
O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating you,
Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before what there in the night,
By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,
The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,
The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere,)
O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then, (for I will conquer it,)
The word final, superior to all,
Subtle, sent up—what is it?—I listen;
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea-waves?
Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?
Whereto answering, the sea,

Delaying not, hurrying not,
Whisper’d me through the night, and very plainly before day-break,

Lisp’d to me the low and delicious word death,
And again death, death, death, death,
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous’d child’s heart,
But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly all over,
Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok’s gray beach,
With the thousand responsive songs at random,
My own songs awaked from that hour,
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
The word of the sweetest song and all songs,
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments, bending aside,)
The sea whisper’d me.

About the Author

On May 31, 1819, Walt Whitman was born in West Hills, Long Island, New York. He was the second child of house builder Walter Whitman and Louisa Van Velsor. The family, which had nine children, resided in Long Island and Brooklyn in the 1820s and 1830s, and Whitman went to the public schools there.

Whitman fell in love with the written word when he was twelve years old and started learning the printer's profession. Being primarily self-taught, he read a great deal and became familiar with the writings of the Bible, Dante, Shakespeare, and Homer. Whitman was employed as a printer in New York City until the printing district was completely destroyed by fire. At the age of seventeen, he started working as a teacher in Long Island's one-room schools in 1836. He kept teaching until 1841, at which point he made journalism his full-time

profession. He established The Long-Islander, a weekly newspaper, and went on to edit several Brooklyn and New York newspapers, such as the Brooklyn Daily Eagle. Whitman departed the Brooklyn Daily Eagle in 1848 to take a three-month position as editor of the New Orleans Crescent. He returned to Brooklyn in the autumn of 1848, having seen the auctions of enslaved people in New Orleans, and co-founded the Brooklyn Freeman, a "free soil" newspaper that he published through the following autumn. Whitman has been characterised as having "unstable and inconsistent" views regarding race. Despite his occasional disagreement with abolitionists, he upheld human dignity.

Whitman continued to hone the distinctive poetic style that subsequently so amazed Ralph Waldo Emerson in Brooklyn. The original edition of Whitman's Leaves of Grass, which included a preface and twelve untitled poems, was copyrighted in 1855. In July of 1855, he mailed Emerson a copy of the volume that he had published himself. In 1856, Whitman published a second edition of the book with thirty-two poems, along with a lengthy open letter from Whitman in response to Emerson's praise of the original edition. Whitman published multiple more versions of the book during his lifetime, continuing to make improvements to the volume. “The merge” as Whitman conceived it, is the tendency of the individual self to overcome moral, psychological, and political boundaries," according to renowned Whitman scholar M. Jimmie Killingsworth. The idea permeates the three major poems of 1855, "I Sing the Body Electric," "The Sleepers," and "Song of Myself," which were all combined under the single title "Leaves of Grass" in the first edition but were distinguished from one another by distinct textual breaks and title repetition.
Whitman made the commitment to lead a "purged" and "cleansed" life at the start of the Civil War. In addition to visiting the injured in hospitals in the New York City region, he was a freelance journalist. Then, in December 1862, he journeyed to Washington, D.C. to tend to his brother's military injuries.

Whitman chose to remain in Washington and work in the hospitals after being struck by the agony of the many injured people there; he ended up remaining for eleven years. He accepted a position as a clerk for the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs. This position terminated when James Harlan, the Interior Secretary, learned that Whitman was the author of Leaves of Grass, a book that Harlan found insulting. He was sacked by Harlan and then joined the attorney general's office.

Whitman experienced a stroke in 1873 that left him largely paralysed. A few months later, he travelled to his brother's home in Camden, New Jersey, to see his mother who was near death. After all, he remained with his brother until the release of Leaves of Grass (James R. Osgood) in 1882, which earned him enough cash to purchase a house in Camden. Whitman spent his final years in the modest two-story clapboard house, compiling Good-Bye My Fancy, his collection of poetry and prose, and adding to and revising his deathbed edition of Leaves of Grass (David McKay, 1891–92). Whitman was laid to rest in a mausoleum he had designed and had constructed on a plot in Harleigh Cemetery following his death on March 26, 1892.

He is regarded as one of the most significant poets in American history, along with Emily Dickinson.

Summary

A little child is enthralled with the bond between a pair of birds that he observes breeding on the beach close to his house. The female bird disappears from sight one day. The male calls for his missing mate while remaining close to the nest. The child seemed to be able to interpret what the male bird was saying after being moved by his calls. He begs nature to give him the one word after being moved to tears by the bird's melancholy. He hears the word "death" in the crackle of the waves at his feet, and it appears in his poetry along with the bird's singing. The poet remembers something that emerges from the ocean waves' never-ending cradle. He remembers walking out of bed as a child to explore the mysteries of life and death on his own. As a grown man, he draws on all of his experiences while also going beyond them.

He now remembers seeing two mockingbirds in May, during the mauve blossom season, on the Paumanok coastline. The phrase "two together" summed up the birds' existence as they sung of their love. When the female vanished one day, the male waited tensely for her to return. He spoke to the wind, saying, "I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me." The curious youngster, who loved every note in his song, felt his heart pierced because he knew the significance of the bird he called his brother. The boy was extremely moved by the bird's sorrow. For the bird, every shadow represented the reappearance of his mate's desired form.

The wailing sea, the ferocious matriarch, echoed the bird's notes. The sea whispered secrets to the boy who grew up to be a poet and outspoken poet. With great anticipation, the

youngster implored the sea to reveal to him the meaning that was final, supreme, and of utmost importance. The poet heard the waves speak the "delicious word death" just before morning. The boy tried to balance his view of the sea with his vision of the bird during this encounter, and this realisation signalled the emergence of the poet within him. The boy's consciousness was projected onto the bird, the lone bird singer. The keyword was whispered in his ear by the waves, akin to a "old crone rocking the cradle."

This poem was first published in 1859 under the title "A Child's Reminiscence." It was then retitled "A Word out of the Sea" in 1860. Finally, in 1871, it was given its current, highly symbolic title. The phrase "a word from the sea" that the current title alludes to is death, which is the second stage of the birth and rebirth process.

It is believed that the poet's deeply intimate experience served as the inspiration for the poem. Whitman's biographers have a chosen but useless area of conjecture over what that experience was. The poem declares that eternal life has prevailed over death. Although the poem's meaning is implied rather than explicitly stated, it becomes clear when one recalls the narrator's early years. Whitman skillfully reenacts this curious man's early years while simultaneously illustrating the boy's development into a man and the man's transformation into a bard. The poem's key themes are this time sequence and the poet's developing consciousness.

An essential factor in this tremendous development is memory. The boy first tries to take in the poignant mockingbird singing. The reason the youngster later switches the bird for a more significant character in the poem is that he is trying to combine the essence of the sea's secret with the content of the bird's song. Since it's a necessary condition for rebirth, the word "delicious" refers to death.

Because of the way Whitman uses imagery and symbolism, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" is one of his best poems. The title is a birth emblem in and of itself. The poem's atmosphere and symbolic landscape are influenced by the sun, moon, land, sea, stars, and waves of the sea. These visuals contribute to the dramatic structure and heighten the impact of the poem's emotions, such as those expressed in the bird's song.

The Soul Selects Her Own Society – Emily Dickinson

Poem

The Soul selects her own Society —
Then — shuts the Door —
To her divine Majority —
Present no more —

Unmoved — she notes the Chariots — pausing —
At her low Gate —
Unmoved — an Emperor be kneeling
Upon her Mat —

I've known her — from an ample nation —
Choose One —
Then — close the Valves of her attention —
Like Stone —

About the Author

On December 10, 1830, Emily Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts. She spent just a year at South Hadley's Mount Holyoke Female Seminary. Edward Dickinson, her father, was a one-term member of Congress and was heavily involved in local, state, and federal politics. Austin, her brother, lived next door to his wife, Susan Gilbert, after graduating from law school and starting his career as an attorney. During her life, Dickinson's younger sister Lavinia and Austin were her intellectual companions. Lavinia also resided at home.

Dickinson's upbringing in a Puritan New England town, which promoted a Calvinist, orthodox, and conservative approach to Christianity, as well as her reading of the Book of Revelation and the Metaphysical poets of seventeenth-century England all had a significant influence on her poetry. She loved John Keats' poetry as well as that of Elizabeth and Robert Barrett Browning. Rumours of its disgracefulness discouraged her from reading Walt Whitman's verse, yet the two poets are today linked by their illustrious status as the forerunners of an exclusively American lyrical voice. Dickinson was not well known during her lifetime, despite the fact that she wrote a great deal and frequently included poems in

letters to friends. Her final volume was released in 1955, while the first was published posthumously in 1890. 1886 saw her passing in Amherst.

Dickinson's family found forty handbound volumes containing approximately 1,800 poems—also referred to as "fascicles"—after her death. Dickinson put these booklets together by duplicating what appear to be the final drafts of poems then folding and stitching five or six sheets of stationery paper. A range of dash-like marks in different sizes and orientations (some even vertical) may be seen in the handwritten poems. Her numerous early editors erased her notes after the poems were first published unbound and in accordance with their artistic standards. Her dashes are now replaced with an en-dash in the standard edition of her poems, which is a typographical approximation that is more accurate to her intention. It wasn't until 1981 that Ralph W. Franklin rearranged the poems in their original order using the physical evidence of the paper itself. Franklin pieced the packets back together using hints left by smudge marks and needle punctures. Since then, a number of commentators have suggested that these little collections have a thematic unity rather than a just convenient or chronological arrangement. The only book that maintains the sequence is The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson (Belknap Press, 1981).

Summary

"The Soul selects her own Society" is popular. The poem "The Soul selects her own society" was written by the reclusive American poet Emily Dickinson and was published in 1862. It was one among the pieces in her 1890 debut collection. Her ideas of a soul's independence are expressed in the poem. The poem's display of individuality is what makes it beautiful and is a big part of why it's so well-liked.

"The Soul chooses her own Community." In the Role of a symbol of independence and uniqueness: The speaker of the poem, who just so happens to be Emily Dickinson, claims that the soul has chosen her own group of friends, keeping everyone else out and closing the door to the majority as though there were no friends outside of this circle. It's interesting that she chose this quiet place for herself. According to her, no one, not even an emperor arriving in a chariot, could ever move her gate. The reason for this is that she has grown so independent that she is content to spend time alone herself. By referring to the soul as "her," Dickinson personifies the soul and demonstrates her intimate knowledge of it. She also demonstrates how the soul has chosen one person from the group and is pleased with their isolation, putting the others firmly outside of this circle and as solidly as a stationary stone.

Principal Ideas in "The Soul Chooses Her Own Society": In the poem "The Soul selects her own Society," three main themes are spirituality, uniqueness, and self-reliance. Dickinson demonstrates how the Soul chooses solitude over community when it wishes to lead a self-sufficient life. She gains her independence and refuses to bow down to monarchs or chariots when they arrive at her home. She presents the Soul as a feminine figure and continues by saying that she chooses one person and leaves the others. It's possible that she was a self-reliant person who believed that each person had the right to decide whether or not to include them in their group of close friends.

Critical Analysis

The speaker opens "The Soul selects her own Society" with the statement that would eventually become the poem's title in the first brief verse. Because Emily Dickinson never gave her poems titles after she composed them, this is a typical practice when it comes to her poetry. In the first words, she explains how "The Soul," whether it be hers or someone else's, chooses the person or individuals she wishes to become close to and then "shuts the Door." Right now, nobody is permitted to enter her "divine Majesty." Only a chosen few, or just one, is permitted to fully and genuinely know her.

The second verse of "The Soul selects her own Society" highlights the soul's tenacity and resolve. The speaker in Dickinson's poem observes that it makes no difference who knocks on her soul's door. One possibility is that an Emperor is "kneeling" on the chariots' mat and "pausing— / At her low Gate." She wouldn't be persuaded by either of these to unlock the door to her heart. This ought to demonstrate to the reader the kind of person who is at the door (their stature, money, and opulence). The soul opens only to people it chooses, and for purposes beyond the ordinary.

The speaker cuts back to discuss the soul's unique selection procedure in the last four words of "The Soul selects her own Society." She is aware that "her" selects "one" from the "ample nation" of candidates seeking access to her most private existence. The "Valves of her attention— / Like Stone" are then closed by her. implying that the "valve" or door will never be opened again. The stone imagery and the valve metaphor contribute to the poem's solid conclusion. The speaker is stating that nothing could persuade the soul to alter her mind; this is how things are.

After Apple Picking – Robert Frost

Poem

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still,
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough
And held against the world of hoary grass.
It melted, and I let it fall and break.
But I was well
Upon my way to sleep before it fell,
And I could tell
What form my dreaming was about to take.
Magnified apples appear and disappear,
Stem end and blossom end,
And every fleck of russet showing clear.
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.
And I keep hearing from the cellar bin
The rumbling sound
Of load on load of apples coming in.
For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.
There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch,
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.

For all
That struck the earth,
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,
Went surely to the cider-apple heap
As of no worth.
One can see what will trouble
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is.
Were he not gone,
The woodchuck could say whether it's like his
Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,
Or just some human sleep.

About the Author

On March 26, 1874, Robert Frost was born in San Francisco, where his mother, Isabelle Moodie, and father, William Prescott Frost, Jr., had recently relocated from Pennsylvania following their marriage. When Frost was eleven years old, his mother and his two-year-old sister Jeanie moved to Lawrence, Massachusetts, following the death of their father from TB. During his high school years in Lawrence, he developed an interest in reading and writing poetry. In 1892, he enrolled at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, and then at Harvard University, though he never received a formal degree. After graduating from college, Frost worked as a teacher, a cobbler, and an editor for the Lawrence Sentinel, among other employment. "My Butterfly," his debut poem, was published on November 8, 1894, in The Independent, a newspaper published in New York. Frost wed Elinor Miriam White in 1895; the two had been valedictorians in their high school classes and served as a key source of inspiration for Frost's poetry until her passing in 1938. The couple attempted and failed at farming in New Hampshire before relocating to England in 1912. Frost encountered and absorbed the poetry of modern British poets like Edward Thomas, Robert Graves, and Rupert Brooke when he was overseas. Frost befriended poet Ezra Pound while he was living in England, and Pound assisted Frost in getting his writing published and promoted.

Frost established his reputation by publishing two full-length collections by the time he returned to the United States in 1915: A Boy's Will (Henry Holt and Company, 1913) and

North of Boston (Henry Holt and Company, 1914). He was the most well-known poet in America by the 1920s, and his reputation and accolades, which included four Pulitzer Prizes, grew with each new book he published, such as New Hampshire (1923), A Further Range (1936), Steeple Bush (1947), and In the Clearing (1962) (Henry Holt and Company). In 1958–1959, Frost provided poetry consultation to the Library of Congress. He received the Congressional Gold Medal in 1962.

Frost is everything but a local poet, even if the majority of his work is connected to the people and places of New England. Frost was a poet of conventional poem forms and metrics, and he stayed resolutely apart from the literary trends and movements of his day. The writer of introspective, frequently gloomy reflections on universal topics, he embodies the essence of modern poetry in his commitment to using language as it is actually used, in the psychological nuance of his portrayals, and in the extent to which his writing is permeated with layers of sarcasm and ambiguity.

Robert Frost was once described as "the Puritan ethic turned astonishingly lyrical and enabled to say out loud the sources of its own delight in the world" by poet Daniel Hoffman in a 1970 review of The Poetry of Robert Frost. Hoffman also remarks on Frost's rise to fame as the "American Bard," saying that "he became a national celebrity, our nearly official poet laureate, and a great performer in the tradition of that earlier master of the literary vernacular, Mark Twain."

President John F. Kennedy stated of Frost, "He has bequeathed his nation a body of imperishable verse from which Americans will forever gain joy and understanding," at the poet's inauguration. Not to mention, "He saw poetry as a way to save power from itself." Poetry serves as a gentle reminder of man's limitations when power pushes him towards arrogance. Poetry serves as a reminder of the complexity and diversity of human experience when power limits the sphere of human concern. Poetry purifies when power corrupts. After spending many years as a resident and educator in Vermont and Massachusetts, Robert Frost passed away in Boston on January 29, 1963.

Summary

The apple-picker who climbed a tree with his two-pointed ladder is described in the first line of the poem. Even though there are two or three barrels that he neglected to remove the branches from and one that they didn't fill, he is now completely worn out from collecting apples. He's tired since winter has come and the fragrance of apples is fading. He now finds

all he needs in nature. While gathering apples, he went into a trance and began to dream. He's not sure what he saw in his dream, but he does know that large apples had appeared and then vanished. It seems to him that the wind is what is causing his ladder to wobble. He talks about the thrill of the sense of hearing after having talked about the joy of sight. He says he can hear lots of apples being brought in all the time from the downstairs bin. He's feeling it too, he's so tired from picking apples. When his request of having a large apple tree is granted, he says he is tired from working so much. He is faced with ten thousand apples, and he can't allow any of them to drop to the ground for fear of their getting broken and rendered useless. Regardless of the type of sleep, the apple picker anticipates what will make him have trouble falling asleep. Had he stayed in the apple orchard, the woodchuck would have told him whether his slumber was bird-like or just human.

Critical Analysis

As Cleanth Brooks noted, After Apple Picking is an excellent example of a "realistic account." The farmer describes the poem as an exceptional piece of descriptive writing in which it is simply "overtired" and rejects the idea of sleeping with a touch of peculiar humour.

Even the most flawless, accurate description that sparks our creativity and imagination, nevertheless, usually has symbolic meanings. Such a description goes beyond describing a physical object and vaguely conveys other sensations as well. All of this is relevant to Apple Picking After. Furthermore, a rereading of the poem reveals elements that are challenging to comprehend from a strictly practical perspective. The first of these sections states anything in line 7. You may take everything that has happened up to that time as a literal description.

We are forced to evaluate nonrealistic readings in line 7. In an odd way, the poem uses the highly controversial term "essence." It is not consistent with the vocabulary of the everyday, ordinary worlds described in the poem's first half. This unusual phrase serves as a guide or signpost in the poem. Though most people associate the word "essence" with scent or distillates, it also has a philosophical connotation that refers to something eternal and permanent, such as an essential part of substance. The term "scent" (as opposed to substitutes such as "odour" or "smell") is consistent with the initial idea of "essence." Nevertheless, it

has additional philosophical value, and the assonance offers a more nuanced subtext. Apple scent is a precious perfume, but it should also have something to do with "winter sleep."

A colon (:) is used to introduce the line "I am drowsing off" after the phrase "scent of apples." The smell of apples almost puts the harvester to sleep. That this is not a normal, literal slumber is indicated by the next sentence. Looking through the window ice that morning, there had been something different about how the slumber had begun. Thus, for some reason, the combination of the apple scent and the strangeness of the ice vision produces the "winter sleep."

That leads to the dream. It is true that, similar to when someone drives all day and still has to cope with incoming traffic, when we are overtired, we frequently repeat the behaviour that caused us to feel that way in our dreams. As such, this dream's nature has a psychologically sound basis. However, we also need to keep in mind that it was provided that morning, and dreams that are true to life don't begin that way. But compared to the themes in Frost's poem Desert Palaces, the elements in this poem are less explicit—rather, "they are constantly implying a kind of fantasy." Brooks, C.

Starting at the beginning of the poem, a number of distinctions are made between the worlds of summer and winter, work and relaxation, effort and reward, alertness and sleep, normal eyesight and the world warped by ice, and reality and dreams. Additionally, every combination highlights a distinct aspect of a single contrast. However, what is the contrast? Think of it as a comparison, if you will, of two perspectives on events or life in general.
Put differently, we view picking and apple-picking from a broad, basic, generalised perspective, as the culmination of some human labour in the real world, followed by reward, rest, and dreaming. Going a step further, we could contend that the ideal and the real world are incompatible. Details such as "My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree/Toward heaven still" reveal the truth. The ideal, however, understands "Towards heaven still" philosophically in order to go beyond the factual claim. Then, "heaven" turns into the place where man lives, receives his rewards, and stores his aspirations and ambitions.
At this point, one could argue that since the dream in the poem seems to be a nightmare of the day's work, it is odd to associate it with the ideal. Have I yet to awaken from this dream? The poet says he is "overtired" from spending so much time harvesting apples. He is aware that his sleep will be interrupted and that the instep arch will stop the agony. But we also need to weigh these direct comments against the overall calibre of the work.

The Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls – E. E. Cummings

Poem

the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls

are unbeautiful and have comfortable minds

(also, with the church's protestant blessings

daughters, unscented shapeless spirited)

they believe in Christ and Longfellow, both dead,

are invariably interested in so many things—

at the present writing one still finds

delighted fingers knitting for the is it Poles?

perhaps. While permanent faces coyly bandy

scandal of Mrs. N and Professor D

.... the Cambridge ladies do not care, above

Cambridge if sometimes in its box of

sky lavender and cornerless, the

moon rattles like a fragment of angry candy

About the Author

On October 14, 1894, Edward Estlin Cummings was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He attended Cambridge Latin High School, where he studied Latin and Greek, and started writing poems as early as 1904. Harvard University awarded him a BA in 1915 and an MA in 1916. He first encountered avant-garde poets like Ezra Pound and Gertrude Stein during his studies there.

An early collection of poetry by Cummings was included in the anthology Eight Harvard Poets in 1917. In the same year, Cummings volunteered to drive ambulances during World War I and departed the United States for France. However, because of his strong anti-war beliefs, five months after his assignment, he and a buddy were detained in a prison camp by the French government on suspicion of spying (an event he describes in his book The

Enormous Room). Following the war, Cummings established his permanent summer residence, Joy Farm in New Hampshire, and Greenwich Village, with regular trips to Paris. Along the way, he visited poets and artists all around Europe, including Pablo Picasso, whose creations he found especially inspiring.

The Dial published seven of Cummings' poems in 1920, one of which was "Buffalo Bill's." These "experiments," which marked Cummings's introduction to a broader American audience, hinted at the synthetic Cubist approach Cummings would follow in the coming years.

Through extensive experimentation with form, punctuation, spelling, and grammar in his writing, Cummings broke with conventional methods and frameworks to produce a new, wildly individualistic style of poetry. He was frequently chastised later in his career for not pushing his work towards greater progress and instead settled into his unique style. Despite this, he became very well-liked, particularly with younger readers, because of his straightforward style, lighthearted tone, and sensitivity to issues like sex and war. Cummings is "one of the most individual poets who ever lived—and, though it sometimes seems so, it is not just his vices and exaggerations, the defects of his qualities, that make a writer popular," according to poet and critic Randall Jarrell. But the main reason that people adore Mr. Cummings's poetry is that they are loaded with sentimentality, sensuality, crude humour, and simple lyrical insistency.

Throughout his life, Cummings was bestowed with several accolades, such as the Bollingen Prize in Poetry in 1958, the Academy of American Poets Fellowship, two Guggenheim Fellowships, the Harvard Charles Eliot Norton Professorship, and a Ford Foundation grant. After Robert Frost, he was the second-most read poet in the country on September 3, 1962, the day of his death. In Boston, Massachusetts' Forest Hills Cemetery, he is laid to rest.

Summary

E.E. Cummings published a brief satirical poem titled "The Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls" in 1923. This poem, which is set in Cambridge, Massachusetts—a city famous for its upper-class lifestyle and home to Harvard University—criticises a particular subset of the city's sophisticated and wealthy populace. With its unusual punctuation and space, the poem is written in Cummings' particular style, which uses wit and irony to make its point.

In the poem's first words, the speaker establishes a mocking tone by calling the titular women "unbeautiful" and having "comfortable minds." Cummings implies a disconnection between their outside and interior ideas through this juxtaposition. By doing this, he highlights their conformist and materialistic worldview and implies that they are shallow and insipid. These lines highlight the poet's scathing viewpoint on the Cambridge ladies and their way of life and act as a crucial introduction to the poem's main issue.

The speaker goes on to criticise these women, saying that they go to church because they think religion would grant them "protestant blessings" and that this will make them virtuous and upright. Their daughters receive these blessings after that, but they are described as "unscented shapeless spirited," which implies that they are equally uninspired and uninteresting as their mothers.

Cummings proceeds with his criticism by emphasising that the Cambridge women have unwavering faith in both Christ and Longfellow, even though they are both dead. This parody of literary and religious figures betrays a stubborn attachment to customs that may have lost their relevance in the modern world. The description of the women as "invariably interested in so many things" lends a lighthearted touch by suggesting that they are easily sidetracked or shallow in their many interests. The ladies' broad but maybe superficial interests and their seeming unquestioned devotion to conventional views are then criticised by Cummings.

The speaker berates the Cambridge women for their sporadic interest in current affairs. "At the present writing one still finds" alludes to a transient interaction with the outside world. The image of "delighted fingers knitting for the is it Poles?" suggests that people's allegiance to a cause could be fleeting or shallow. Cummings adds the word "perhaps" to highlight the ambiguity or lack of sincerity.

In the meantime, the women's "permanent faces coyly bandy scandal of Mrs. N and Professor D" point to a propensity for idle conversation and gossip as opposed to an actual interest in serious topics. The speaker makes the implication that their goals are ephemeral and susceptible to change in response to shifting public opinion currents. This strengthens the joke about the women's lack of steadfast, profound beliefs.

The speaker claims in the last few words that the ladies of Cambridge don't care about what goes on outside of the university. "The Cambridge ladies do not care, above" implies a narrow concern for things outside of their immediate environment. In the next line, the poet

presents a striking image, speaking of the moon as rattling "like a fragment of angry candy" inside its "box of sky lavender and cornerless." This inventive picture adds a bizarre and comical touch, maybe implying that these seemingly disinterested and disconnected women are not even stirred by nature's interruptions. The lines accentuate the idea of the ladies' narrow-mindedness and disregard for bigger issues.

Critical Analysis

The poem "The Cambridge Ladies Who Live in Furnished Souls" by E.E. Cummings is a satirical examination of social mores and the lives of a specific set of upper-class Cambridgeians in the early 20th century. The poet uses unusual punctuation and space, among other unique literary strategies, as is customary with Cummings. This stylistic decision reflects the criticism present in the lyrics and highlights his sense of rebellion against conventional norms. He also combines words in unusual ways; for example, "sky lavender and cornerless." By combining two unusual words, a vibrant and surreal image is created that defies conventional thinking. The comma that appears between "sky lavender" and "cornerless" forces the reader to actively explore the linguistic space and asks them to picture the moon enclosed in a box without corners.

In addition to contributing to the poem's distinctive style, this particular choice of language expresses the constricted and possibly limited perspectives of the Cambridge ladies metaphorically. Cummings' purposeful eschewing of traditional grammar and imagery serves as a powerful vehicle for expressing his attitude of rebellion and subtle criticism throughout the lines. "The Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls," a 14-line poem that purposefully deviates from sonnet norms, is structurally similar to a sonnet. Cummings' poem adopts a free verse style and does away with the iambic pentameter that is typically associated with sonnets, in contrast to the rigid rhyme system and metre of a sonnet.

The poem's erratic line lengths, punctuation, and spacing break convention and highlight Cummings' rebellious attitude even more. This stylistic decision highlights the difference between Cummings' free-spirited approach to poetic form and the stiff cultural standards placed on the women the poem criticises. The interruption in the smooth flow of the poem prompts the reader to scrutinise it more thoroughly, reflecting the poet's wish for the characters of this poem to pause their current activities and reflect more deeply on their own lives.

In the years after World War I, this poem was penned. After the war, society changed and traditional norms were called into question. The larger cultural changes that were occurring at this time are reflected in Cummings' sarcastic criticism on the Cambridge ladies. The image of women adhering to traditional values—as evidenced by their steadfast religious devotion and respect for Longfellow—may represent a reluctance to adopt the more progressive ideas that arose in the years following World War II. As a result, the poem becomes a momentary representation of the cultural conflicts and reluctance to change that characterised the era.

Cummings was not the only one investigating conformity and revolt in the years between the wars. During this period, authors from the Lost Generation, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Modernist Movement broke social norms and created new literary genres. This placed Cumminngs in the company of other artists who frequently looked into topics of personal expression, societal critique, and disillusionment.

The geographical emphasis on Cambridge is probably deliberate and has symbolic meaning. Cambridge is not simply the location of Cummings' residence; it is also the site of esteemed universities like Harvard University. He also lived in Cambridge, and in the poem he belittles Longfellow. Cambridge, then, is a well-established centre of scholarly and intellectual activity. The poet's decision to focus the criticism in this particular area raises questions about the dangers of intellectual privilege and expectations in such prestigious groups. Furthermore, Cummings is able to present a microcosm of accepted standards and behaviours typical of the intellectual and wealthy circles of his day because of Cambridge's historical and cultural background.

Anecdote of the Jar – Wallace Stevens

Poem

I placed a jar in Tennessee,

And round it was, upon a hill.

It made the slovenly wilderness

Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,

And sprawled around, no longer wild.

The jar was round upon the ground

And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.

The jar was gray and bare.

It did not give of bird or bush,

Like nothing else in Tennessee.

About the Author

On October 2, 1879, Wallace Stevens was born in Reading, Pennsylvania. From 1897 till 1900, he was an undergraduate at Harvard University. He had intended to go to Paris and work as a writer, but he ultimately chose to pursue a legal education after taking a brief job as a reporter for the New York Herald Times. Stevens was admitted to the bar the year after earning his degree from New York Law School in 1903. Up until 1916, he was a lawyer in New York City. Stevens was active in the literary scene in New York even though he was concentrating on his law profession. Among the poets and painters of Greenwich Village who were his acquaintances were E. E. Cummings, William Carlos Williams, and Marianne Moore. He submitted a collection of poems titled "Phases" to Harriet Monroe in 1914 as

entries for a Poetry magazine war poem competition, using the alias "Peter Parasol." Although Monroe published Stevens' work in November of that year, Stevens was not awarded the prize.

After landing a job with the Hartford Accident & Indemnity Co. in 1916, Stevens relocated to Connecticut, rising to the position of vice president there in 1934. In addition, he had started to forge an identity for himself apart from the legal and economic spheres. Harmonium (Alfred A. Knopf), his debut collection of poetry, was released in 1923. It showed elements of both the French Symbolists and the English Romantics, as well as an entirely unique style and sensibility that was whimsical, exotic, and full of the light and colour of an Impressionist painting. Stevens concentrated on his professional career in business over the ensuing years. However, he didn't start publishing new poetry until 1930. The subsequent year saw the publication of Harmonium in a second edition by Knopf, which had fourteen brand-new poems but left out three of the distinctly worse ones.

Stevens was more interested in the transformational potential of the imagination than any other poet of the contemporary era. Stevens sat quietly at a desk in his office, writing poems in the evenings and on his way to and from work. He had an otherwise boring life. Even though Wallace Stevens is now regarded as one of the most important American poets of the 20th century, he was not well-known until The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (Knopf, 1954), which was released a year before he passed away. His other notable works are Notes Towards a Supreme Fiction (The Cummington Press, 1942), The Man with the Blue Guitar (Alfred A. Knopf, 1937), Ideas of Order (The Alcestis Press, 1935), and The Necessary Angel (Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), a collection of essays on poetry. On August 2, 1955, Stevens passed away in Hartford, Connecticut.

Summary

Wallace Stevens is a well-known philosopher and poet who uses vivid imagery to probe the reality of the world we live in. These pictures are frequently the stuff of dreams and symbolic paintings you could see in a modernist gallery, where an everyday object is placed in an odd environment. Stevens describes an empty, grey jar in "the wilderness," above what appears to be a desolate, probably grassy hill. By doing this, he offers a thoughtful analysis of how society views itself in the world.

In this poem, Stevens adopts an intriguing writing style by narrating in the first person. He does not attempt to pin any possible underlying contempt for humanity on a

fictional character or the populace at large. Rather, he starts the poem with the words "I placed a jar in Tennessee" and then adds his own insights. Because the reader believes Stevens' account and recognises that his understanding of human presence in nature is societal rather than personal, his honesty and confessional approach are immensely effective.

In an otherwise non-human universe, Stevens employs the jar as a metaphor for humanity and its creations. From the perspective of those who live in that society, the last two lines of the first verse and the first two lines of the second stanza illustrate how society dominates everything else. The hill was plain and barren before it came into contact with humans, especially considering that the "wild" around it. However, as soon as the jar settles into the hill, it draws attention and transforms the once-wild scene into one that is orderly, uninteresting, and unimportant. When Stevens writes, "It made the slovenly wilderness / surround that hill," he expresses the shift in his perspective.

According to Stevens, the wilderness not only becomes messy when human order is present, but it also makes a vain attempt to become more ordered. "The wilderness rose up to it, / And sprawled around, no longer wild," the author says. He uses, for example, trees that are trying to reach the summit of the hill but failing, spreading, and eventually lying flat and becoming unrecognisable. This picture alludes to the narrator's opinion that nature longs to blend in with human civilization, the height of existence, but is unable to do so. The most crucial aspect of this remark, though, is that it is merely the narrator's opinion; nature is driven beyond the pale of significance only by selfish human perspective.

The last stanza highlights the society's oppressive influence on everything else while also describing its emptiness or lack of meaningful substance. Stevens illustrates this striking contrast with two consecutive lines: "Everywhere it took dominance / The jar was bare and grey." Besides being a dismal grey colour, the jar is empty. The grey jar with absolutely nothing within is the symbol of humanity. In contrast to what nature provides—animals, plants, life, or, in his words, "bird" and "bush"—it delivers nothing to the world. The "wilderness" aspect of Tennessee—or the world, for that matter—offers substance, yet the jar nevertheless excels in its surroundings. At least in our opinion.

Critical Analysis

The poem titled "Anecdote of the Jar" is not an ode to a jar or even a song. In fact, some critics of the poem, including Pat Righelato and Helen Vendler, have read the poem as a sort of implicit response to Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," akin to an American poet

responding to the European poetic tradition. Anecdotes are lighthearted, humorous, and frequently unimportant. Is it appropriate not to take this strange poem too seriously?

There are several especially cryptic lines in the poem. We are informed that the jar "did not give of bird or bush." Does this only suggest that the jar was an inanimate object and had no regard for the surrounding live environment? Or that, in contrast to the bird and the bush, the jar does not advance or add anything to the natural world? Is this a situation where the adage "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" applies? Is the subject of this poetry convenience? Food is a product of nature that we manufacture and sell in jars. America is, of course, the cradle of consumer capitalism. Among other things, a jar represents this.

More broadly, "Anecdote of the Jar" could also be seen as a poem on the triumph of man over nature. Take note of how the jar's placement atop the hill forces the natural world to envelop it, causing nature to eventually lose its untamed quality. The jar appears to spread to everything in its immediate vicinity and eliminates the very wildness that defines the natural world. The use of the terms "round" repeatedly—"round," "Surround," "around," "round," and "ground"—emphasizes the jar's circular form as well as the distinction between the artificial jar and the "wilderness" of nature—perhaps even America—that envelops and "sprawl[s] around" it.

Lady Lazarus – Sylvia Plath

Poem

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?
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.

About the Author

On October 27, 1932, in Boston, Massachusetts, Sylvia Plath was born. When Aurelia Schober, the mother of Plath, first met Otto Plath, her father, she was a master's student at Boston University and her professor. The couple tied the knot in January 1932. Otto was a biology teacher who specialised in teaching bee science, or apiology, along with German.

Her father passed away in 1940 at the age of eight due to complications from diabetes. He had been harsh, and Plath's relationships and poems—most notably the elegiac and notorious poem "Daddy"—were profoundly shaped by both his authoritarian attitudes and his passing. Beginning at the age of eleven, Plath kept a journal and had her poems published in local newspapers and publications. Not long after she graduated from high school in 1950, she appeared in the Christian Science Monitor, her first national publication. Plath enrolled at Smith College in 1950 and earned a summa cum laude degree there in 1955.

On a Fulbright Scholarship, Plath relocated to Cambridge, England, following her graduation. She met English poet Ted Hughes at a party at the beginning of 1956. Plath and Hughes tied the knot on June 16, 1956, not long after. In 1957, Plath went back to Massachusetts and started taking classes with Robert Lowell. Colossus, her debut poetry collection, was released in the United States and England in 1960 and 1962, respectively. She went back to England, where in 1960 and 1962, respectively, she gave birth to her children, Frieda and Nicholas. Ted Hughes moved away from Plath to Assia Gutmann Wevill in 1962. The majority of the poetry found in Plath's most well-known book, Ariel, were written over that winter. Under the pen name Victoria Lucas, Plath released her semi-autobiographical book The Bell Jar the following year. On February 11, 1963, she passed away.

Plath's poetry is frequently likened to the works of poets like Lowell and her fellow classmate Anne Sexton, and it is linked to the Confessional movement. Her writing is frequently praised for the striking combination of its eerie or horrific images with its lighthearted use of rhyme and alliteration. While Plath only had one book published while she was still alive, Colossus, Hughes also published three other volumes of her poetry after her death, including The Collected Poems, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1982. Plath was a prolific poet. The first poet to receive a Pulitzer Prize posthumously was Plath.

Summary

The three sections of "Lady Lazarus" each concentrate on a different facet of the speaker's thoughts and existence. "I have done it again," is a potent starting statement that implies the speaker has engaged in self-destructive behaviour or made an attempt at suicide. The speaker illustrates the idea of overcoming adversity and demonstrating strength by drawing a comparison between themselves and the biblical figure Lazarus, who was raised from the dead by Jesus.

The speaker considers their previous efforts at suicide in the opening section of the poem. These efforts are referred to as public performances or shows. They discuss how they can rise from the dead, much like Lazarus did in the Bible, and transform their suffering into a show that other people can witness. The language, which compares the Nazi concentration camps and electric shocks to a circus, is strong and unsettling. In an attempt to shock and challenge the audience, the speaker adopts a tone that is both defiant and emotionally distant.

In the second section of the poem, the speaker discusses her feelings and thoughts. Speaking straight to the audience, she says that her prior suicide attempts shouldn't come as a surprise. She compares herself to a "fiery-footed phoenix" and a "walking miracle" as examples of how she utilises metaphors to describe herself. The speaker is aware of the influence her suicidal thoughts have over her and how they can both terrify and intrigue people around her. She uses her body as a metaphorical weapon to further project a sense of control and power.

Stated differently, the speaker reflects on their experiences and the challenges of explaining them to others in the poem's last section. Because they feel their feelings are too profound and significant to fully understand or articulate, they feel lonely and frustrated. The poem ends with the refrain, "Out of the ash I rise with my red hair," which emphasises the concepts of resilience, beginning over, and finding strength even in trying circumstances.

Critical Analysis

The profoundly intimate and candid poem "Lady Lazarus" is inspired by Sylvia Plath's experiences with mental illness and suicide thoughts. The poem examines the speaker's complicated relationship with death, her need for attention, and her battle for uniqueness through striking and occasionally startling imagery.

The poem's usage of mythical and religious references is one of its key features. Invoking the image of the phoenix and drawing a comparison between herself and Lazarus, the speaker declares her capacity to rise from the ashes and defeat death. Even in the midst of excruciating agony and suffering, the speaker is able to recover control and agency over her own life by using these allusions.

The poem delves into the idea of spectacle and performance as well. The speaker uses her suicide acts as a means of provocating and captivating her audience, viewing them as performances. This is a reflection of Plath's experiences as a poet, who is always conscious of the need to use her words to make a strong and memorable impression. The poem poses concerns regarding the lines that separate human experience from art as well as the voyeuristic aspect of society's fixation with misery.

There is a conflict between defiance and sensitivity throughout the entire poem. The speaker challenges the audience's responses to her suffering by disclosing her deepest troubles. One could see her disobedience as a means of claiming her uniqueness and standing up to social norms and expectations. The speaker finds it difficult to share her experiences with others in the concluding segment. This frustration is a result of her feeling alone and the idea that her feelings are too deep for others to completely comprehend or share. It highlights the intrinsic challenge of communicating the depths of one's feelings and experiences.

Snapshots of a Daughter-in-law – Adrienne Rich

Poem

1.
You, once a belle in Shreveport,
with henna-colored hair, skin like a peachbud,
still have your dresses copied from that time,
and play a Chopin prelude
called by Cortot: *"Delicious recollections*
float like perfume through the memory."

Your mind now, moldering like wedding-cake,
heavy with useless experience, rich
with suspicion, rumor, fantasy,

crumbling to pieces under the knife-edge
of mere fact. In the prime of your life.

Nervy, glowering, your daughter
wipes the teaspoons, grows another way.

2.

Banging the coffee-pot into the sink
she hears the angels chiding, and looks out
past the raked gardens to the sloppy sky.
Only a week since They said: *Have no patience.*

The next time it was: Be insatiable.
Then: *Save yourself; others you cannot save.*
Sometimes she's let the tapstream scald her arm,
a match burn to her thumbnail,

or held her hand above the kettle's snout
right in the woolly steam. They are probably angels,
since nothing hurts her anymore, except
each morning's grit blowing into her eyes.

3.

A thinking woman sleeps with monsters.
The beak that grips her, she becomes. And nature,
that sprung-lidded, still commodious
steamer-trunk of tempora and mores
gets stuffed with it all: the mildewed orange-flowers,
the female pills, the terrible breasts
of Boadicea beneath flat foxes' heads and orchids.

Two handsome women, gripped in argument,
each proud, acute, subtle, I hear scream
across the cut glass and majolica
like Furies cornered from their prey:
The argument ad *feminam*, all the old knives
that have rusted in my back, I drive in yours,
ma semblable, ma soeur!

4.

Knowing themselves too well in one another:
their gifts no pure fruition, but a thorn,
the prick filed sharp against a hint of scorn. . .
Reading while waiting
for the iron to heat,
writing, *My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun—*
in that Amherst pantry while the jellies boil and scum,
or, more often,
iron-eyed and beaked and purposed as a bird,
dusting everything on the whatnot every day of life.

5.

Dulce ridens, dulce loquens,
she shaves her legs until they gleam
like petrified mammoth-tusk.

6.

When to her lute Corinna sings

neither words nor music are her own;
only the long hair dipping
over her cheek, only the song
of silk against her knees
and these
adjusted in reflections of an eye.

Poised, trembling and unsatisfied, before
an unlocked door, that cage of cages,
tell us, you bird, you tragical machine—
is this fertilisante douleur? Pinned down
by love, for you the only natural action,
are you edged more keen
to prise the secrets of the vault? has Nature shown
her household books to you, daughter-in-law,
that her sons never saw?

7.

"To have in this uncertain world some stay
which cannot be undermined, is
of the utmost consequence."
Thus wrote
a woman, partly brave and partly good,
who fought with what she partly understood.
Few men about her would or could do more,
hence she was labeled harpy, shrew, and whore.

8.

"You all die at fifteen," said Diderot,
and turn part legend, part convention.

Still, eyes inaccurately dream
behind closed windows blankening with steam.
Deliciously, all that we might have been,
all that we were—fire, tears,
wit, taste, martyred ambition—
stirs like the memory of refused adultery
the drained and flagging bosom of our middle years.

9.

Not that it is done well, but
that it is done at all? Yes, think
of the odds! or shrug them off forever.
This luxury of the precocious child,
Time's precious chronic invalid,—
would we, darlings, resign it if we could?
Our blight has been our sinecure:
mere talent was enough for us—
glitter in fragments and rough drafts.

Sigh no more, ladies.
Time is male
and in his cups drinks to the fair.
Bemused by gallantry, we hear
our mediocrities over-praised,
indolence read as abnegation,
slattern thought styled intuition,
every lapse forgiven, our crime
only to cast too bold a shadow
or smash the mold straight off.

For that, solitary confinement,
tear gas, attrition shelling.

Few applicants for that honor.

10.

Well,
she's long about her coming, who must be
more merciless to herself than history.
Her mind full to the wind, I see her plunge
breasted and glancing through the currents,
taking the light upon her
at least as beautiful as any boy
or helicopter,
poised, still coming,
her fine blades making the air wince

but her cargo
no promise then:
delivered
palpable
ours.

About the Author

On May 16, 1929, Adrienne Rich was born in Baltimore, Maryland. After graduating from Radcliffe College in 1951, she was chosen by W. H. Auden to receive the 1951 Yale Series of Younger Poets Prize for her book A Change of World (Yale University Press). Rich wed Alfred H. Conrad, a Harvard University economist, in 1953. In 1955, Harper & Brothers released her second collection of poems, The Diamond Cutters, which caught the attention of Randall Jarrell, who stated that the poet "cannot help seeming to us a sort of princess in a fairy tale."

Rich changed her poetry and her life gradually after giving birth to three kids before becoming thirty. She wrote multiple volumes during the 1960s, such as Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law (Harper & Row, 1963) and Leaflets (W. W. Norton, 1969). Her writing

started to tackle more controversial subjects, including racism, the Vietnam War, and women's roles in society. These poems' style also demonstrated a move away from precise metric patterns and towards free poetry. Rich divorced her husband in 1970, and he killed himself the following year.

Rich authored Diving into the Wreck (W. W. Norton), a book of probing and frequently angry poetry, in 1973, in the midst of the feminist and Civil Rights movements, the Vietnam War, and her own personal sorrow. The anthology won Rich the 1974 National Book Award. Rich shared the medal with her fellow nominees, Alice Walker and Audre Lorde, and accepted it on behalf of all women.

Rich continued to publish a number of poetry collections, such as An Atlas of the Difficult World: Poems 1988–1991 (W. W. Norton, 1991), a finalist for the National Book Award; The School Among the Ruins: Poems 2000–2004 (W. W. Norton, 2004), which won the Book Critics Circle Award; Collected Early Poems: 1950–1970 (W. W. Norton, 1993); and Tonight No Poetry Will Serve: Poems 2007–2010 (W. W. Norton & Co., 2010). Rich is known for her poetry as well as her nonfiction prose works, such as What is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics (W. W. Norton, 1993) and Arts of the Possible: Essays and Conversations (W. W. Norton, 2001).

Summary

The speaker introduces an elderly woman who was once a Southern beauty with "henna-colored hair" (Line 2) and glowing skin in the opening part. She continues to engage in activities that remind her of her youthful beauty: She plays music that evokes "Delicious recollections" (Line 5) of her childhood and dresses in patterns from her youth (Line 3). Although she is still in good physical health and is in her "prime" (Line 11), the things she has seen and experienced over the years have dulled and clouded her mind (Lines 7-8). She is prone to irrationality and enjoys gossip, envy, and "fantasy" in her free time (Line 9). This appears to annoy her daughter, who wishes to "[grow] another way" after witnessing her mother's transformation (Line 13).

A woman is depicted in the second section as listening to 'angels chiding' while cleaning coffee pots in the washbasin (Line 15). She hears voices advising her to prioritise oneself in order to avoid suffering the same fate as her mother-in-law: she can only save herself (Lines 17–19). She is also told to not wait around aimlessly, to not limit her ambitions and the things she wants out of life. The woman lights a match to her fingernail (Line 21),

lets boiling water scorch her palm (Line 20) and even places her hand over the steaming kettle spout (Lines 22–23) while she listens. Since none of this seems to be hurting her (lines 23–24), she feels the voices are angelic. The only thing that hurts is waking up to the same boring life of household chores every day (line 25).

In the third section, the speaker considers how the "monsters" (Line 26) of her depressing and gloomy life would keep any "thinking woman" from sleeping at night. Women follow what is seen as natural for them, but in reality, what is perceived as natural for a woman is made up of "tempora" (the times) and "mores" (social norms and practices) (Lines 27–29). The bravery and ferocity of women, as demonstrated by queen Boadicea, are hidden beneath objects like flowers and menstruation tablets (Lines 30-32). The speaker talks about hearing a loud quarrel between two ladies over the sound of "cut glass and majolica" in a photograph (Line 35). Using the same insults that have wounded them individually as women in the past, they criticise each other's character (Lines 37–39).

The speaker begins the fourth section by explaining how all women see themselves reflected in one another. They take advantage of this insight to harm the other, becoming more abrasive in their comments when they see their mockery met with the other's contempt (Lines 40–42). The speaker tells the story of another woman who, although sharp and purposeful (Line 49), spends most of her time doing household chores like dusting and cleaning (Lines 50). She writes a poem while waiting for jam to boil in a 'Amherst pantry' (Lines 43–44).

A woman is described in the fifth section as grinning and laughing pleasantly (Line 51) as she shaves her legs till they "gleam / like petrified mammoth tusk" (Lines 52–53).

The speaker explains in the sixth section that Corinna simply plays her own appearance and hair, which she modifies based on how other people see her (Lines 56–59), rather than singing her own words or music when she plays the lute (Lines 54–55). The speaker asks Corinna, who is described as "poised" (Line 60), "trembling," "unsatisfied," and living in a cage with an open door (Line 61), if this is a painful situation that will bear fruit (Line 63). The speaker goes on to inquire as to whether the woman, who has been "Pinned down / by love" (Lines 63-64), is eager to explore and learn things withheld from her (Lines 65-66), or if Nature will permanently domesticate her, showing "household books" (Line 67) to her daughters-in-law but not to her sons (Lines 66-68).

At the opening of the seventh section, the speaker quotes Mary Wollstonecraft, who stated that it is critical that women have a position in society that cannot be undervalued (Lines 69–71). Line 73 describes Wollstonecraft as a lady who was "partly brave and partly good," and Line 74 describes her as someone who battled for education despite not having a formal education. Because of her success, she was called a "harpy, shrew, and whore" by the males in her immediate vicinity (Line 76).

Diderot's statement, "You all die at fifteen," begins Section 8. (Line 77). The speaker concurs that women marry at this age, at which point their lives essentially come to an end and they become "part legend" (Line 78), giving in entirely to "convention." In spite of this, women persist in "inaccurately dreaming" (Line 79), even while they stay hidden behind closed kitchen and house windows (Line 80). Like the excitement sparked by the prospect of infidelity, the recollections of who they once were ignite something in their middle-aged bosoms, yet both are ultimately rejected (Lines 81–85).

In Section 9, the speaker talks about how women are encouraged to do anything, even if it's only mediocre, because they're not expected to accomplish things perfectly (Lines 86–87). The speaker, who is now connecting with the women she is speaking to, wonders if all women are prepared to give up the "luxury of the precocious child" (Line 89), which is receiving attention for even the tiniest of things. The fact that women are not expected to do much has proven to be the most harmful to them (Line 92); thus far, they have been satisfied with their raw potential and have not been given the chance or expectation to improve (Lines 93–94).

The speaker then exhorts all females to stop "[sighing]" (Line 95). She claims in line 96 that time is "male" and that she has always valued beauty above all else in line 97. Therefore, women have been valued for their mere mediocrities, their passivity hailed as selfless resignation, and their unkempt or unformed ideas interpreted as intuition (Lines 99–101). Every woman's transgressions are pardoned; the only offences for which she faces punishment are when she dares to show her identity and make her presence known, or when she defies outdated and unnecessary social conventions (Lines 102–04). Because few women are willing to suffer as martyrs, they get the worst punishments, similar to those inflicted on prisoners or even soldiers during a battle (Lines 105–07).

The speaker anticipates the arrival of a woman who will be harsher on herself than history has been to her in the tenth and final stanza, where she expresses optimism for a better

future for women (Lines 108–10). The speaker predicts that the woman will dive headfirst into meaningful and cerebral labour, outperforming any man or machine in terms of efficiency and beauty (Lines 111–15). She'll be relentless in her progress, and her accomplishments won't be something to look forward to—rather, they'll be real, something that belongs to every woman (Lines 118–22).

Critical Analysis

Adrienne Rich's powerful feminist poetry, Snapshots of a Daughter-in-law, delves into several aspects of a woman's existence that are marred by hardships and exploited by men. The word itself alludes to old, disorganised pictures of a woman, daughter-in-law, the relationship mostly associated with the son. Rich purposely chose the daughter-in-law rather than the sister or daughter to highlight the situation of a lady who has rarely lived as an autonomous daughter but rather as a dependent daughter-in-law. It mostly concerns a modern woman's anxieties.

The poem begins with the experiences of a woman who works nonstop at her home, gives her body to her husband at night, and maintains a routine, monotonous life by sacrificing her desires, aspirations, and joys. From there, it takes a revolutionary turn, inspiring women to stand up for their rights and declare their independence from the constraints of their families. The poem transforms towards the conclusion into a lethal weapon for women's rights and might.

Rich envisions a society where women will not only fend off the debilitating consequences of patriarchy but also foster an environment where women have the same social, political, and economic rights as males. She bemoans the squandering of energy in a culture that prioritises beauty over experience in women. The daughter-in-law has a fertile intellect, but she hasn't been able to use it yet. Pictures of her 'banging the coffee pots in the sink' show how frustrated she is.

The poem's general format consists of various pictures of a daughter-in-law that are affixed to one another. The poem's opening speaker speaks to the mother-in-law. The poem begins with the speaker reminding her of her mother-in-law's youthful fantasies and wishes. The mother-in-law's current behaviour is revealed in the second stanza. Although she has had a wealth of experiences in marriage that have crushed her premarital illusions and wisdom, she is oblivious to her daughter-in-law's recurring misery as she descends into a life of adversity.

The second section of the poem takes a turn towards aggression.

The use of supernatural elements is intended to put the woman's daughter-in-law under psychological stress. In this case, "angels" stand in for her "conscience," alerting her to the need to act quickly to assert her rights and seize her freedom. In the third section of the poem, the daughter-in-law is pictured in bed, giving her husband something to eat. She is surrounded by alleged superstitions and social conventions. She tries but is unable to avoid forced suffering. From lines 33 to 39, Rich lashes out with sarcastic jabs at an experienced woman who has endured great hardships yet tries to put those hardships on the less fortunate. They are the same, after all—"masemblable, ma soeur!" Despite having a close relationship, the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law do not respect one another and instead engage in disagreement with the intention of hurting one another. They are both "iron eyed and beaked and purposed as a bird," a sentence that likens the woman to a delicate bird in a cage, unable to keep anything private since it must dust everything on what is not a daily basis.
Adrienne Rich starts to criticise how one lady treats another as well.

The fifth section criticises an environment where women are preoccupied with modesty and beauty.

A woman's life is restricted in the world where she can only be an attractive item or a showpiece. The woman's rights have been so severely taken away from her that she is forced to sing her own song using words and melody that belong to men. Rich bemoans the loss of women's power and ability to communicate, arguing that women are only physical beings, not spiritual beings.

A woman, like a weak bird in a cage, gives birth to sorrows just to be submerged beneath them. The daughter-in-law is impatiently asked by Rich to be proactive, aware, and revolutionary. She is confined to her house by love, and she gives her all to do the chores that have been entrusted to her. The speaker asks the daughter-in-law in the final, rhetorical query of this verse, "If only she hadn't shown her husband household books by the Nature." This question makes the claim that men and women have equal responsibility.

The images from this daughter-in-law's life depict the lifestyle that many ladies at the time were leading. They depict the predicament in which women are constrained by expectations, rendering them both actively and passively hurt by their own selves. The poem's central figure is a young woman who is mindful of the factors that constrain both

herself and other women. Her awareness of these influences gradually shifts from a sense of limitation, helplessness, and subdued range to a hope for change.

Unit – II: Prose

The American Scholar – Ralph Waldo Emerson

About the Author

New England transcendentalism was advocated by American essayist, educator, and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson. He was an advocate of individualism and was profoundly influenced by Immanuel Kant, Henry David Thoreau, and Plato, among others. Waldo was the middle name he went by. He was raised in Boston, Massachusetts, and began shaping his ideas and views while attending Harvard and Harvard Divinity School. His essay collection "Self-Reliance," in which he promotes individualism and discusses the perils of conformism, is his most well-known piece of writing. His writings are still read and studied worldwide.

Ralph Waldo Emerson is the author of the well-known essay "The American Scholar," which was first presented in 1837 as a lecture to the Harvard University Phi Beta Kappa Society. It is regarded as a fundamental work of transcendentalist literature and one of the founding texts of American literature. He makes the case for the Man Thinking, a genuine American scholar who exemplifies the "love of letters" and creates novel, innovative ideas that challenge conventional wisdom. This represents his obligation to the community.

Summary

Introduction

Greetings from Ralph Waldo Emerson to the returning students at the beginning of his address. He draws a comparison between their assembly and that of the ancient Greeks, who got together to compete and listen to historical recitations. He also draws parallels between it and the conferences of mediaeval troubadours, or poets who convened to exchange poetry, and their contemporary scientific groups in Britain and Europe. They are just getting together for friendship right now, but he hopes that could develop into more. He expects that America's "long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands" will end today, that its own distinctive intellectual tradition will finally be realised. His address will therefore focus on

the American scholar and what the modern era has revealed about the character and aspirations of the scholar.

Emerson presents an allegory that he says is derived from a proverbial old tale. He claims that once upon a time, the gods split up a single "Man" into various people, just like fingers are divided in a hand. In order for humanity to achieve more, this was done. The "whole Man" still exists as the culmination of every individual, including the soldier, farmer, politician, and priest. Every individual completes their task and advances society as a result. In contemporary times, individual individuals do not represent the "whole Man." People are no longer united. People can no longer connect with the "complete Man" they once were; they are just focused on their own daily responsibilities. Their sole focus and ability is to pursue their trades. "The priest becomes a form; the attorney a statute-book; the mechanic a machine; the sailor a rope of the ship," Emerson adds. It is the scholar alone who is the "delegated intellect."

In the case of the scholar, this takes the form of someone who mindlessly repeats the observations of others rather than "Man Thinking," as Emerson describes it. "Is not indeed every man a student?" Emerson asks rhetorically as he invites the audience to reflect on the scholar. and "Is not the true scholar the only true master?" The Greek philosopher Epictetus (c. 55–135) is quoted by him when he says, "Everything has two handles: beware of the wrong one." According to Emerson, there is a difference between someone who only mimics the appearance of study by memorising the ideas of others and a true scholar, whom everyone has the potential to become. He suggests talking about the key factors that shape the growth of a real scholar.

Section 1

According to Emerson, studying nature has the biggest and most lasting impact on a scholar's thinking. There are countless cycles in nature that show the perceptive mind how much they resemble the boundless human spirit. Young academics learn how to classify and recognise connections between objects by observing the world around them. They get the ability to recognise that everything is governed by "a law which is also a law of the human mind." Whatever the subject, the scholar will note that human mind and nature reflect each other, and that by understanding one, the scholar is able to categorise and comprehend all of creation.

According to Emerson, a scholar's study of nature will reveal a fundamental cause for all they observe that is not only scientific but also universal and spiritual, and that is where both they and nature originate. As the saying goes, "that nature is the opposite of the soul, answering to it part for part." By studying nature, the scholarly mind will broaden to include an understanding of God's interconnected universe, of which they are an inseparable part, on both an intellectual and spiritual level.

Section 2

According to Emerson, the great thinkers of history have had a significant influence on modern scholars' thinking in addition to their own ideas. Writing, art, and literature—especially books—all serve to convey this. The finest minds of history documented their ideas in poetry while taking inspiration from their surroundings. Writing allowed their thoughts to be passed down to subsequent generations and to figuratively continue to exist inside fresh minds. But neither writers nor readers can fully escape the thinking of their times, so there will always be imperfections in the transmission. The original work will contain assumptions as well as information that is out of date or does not apply to following centuries. Generation after generation "must write its own books."

This is when "mischief" begins, according to Emerson. People start to see books from the past as flawless and adhere rigidly to outdated literature without making any new discoveries. It is drilled into young scholars to emulate the insights of the great thinkers of the past. They fail to recognise that the greatest intellectuals in history were once just young scholars who questioned the conventional view. These folks aren't "Man Thinking," according to Emerson; they just adore literature.

Used books are "the best of things," he claims, while books that have been misused are "among the worst." Emerson believed that the purpose of books is to inspire and awaken the reader's soul. All people are capable of creating, and when books are at their greatest, they encourage their readers to do the same. They run the risk, though, of encouraging mindless copying. Emerson states that when reading literary works, such as the poems and plays of English author William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and the works of Greek philosopher Plato (c. 428–c. 328), readers should only take in what is genuine.

According to Emerson, a scholar shouldn't primarily study from books. Academics ought to be reading only at night and engaging with the outside world first. Emerson rushes

to reassure the listener, though, that he is not planning to undervalue books. He claims that because books bridge brains beyond time, reading them offers a singular pleasure. He talks about how it might make one happy and surprised to discover that their own opinions are comparable to those of someone who lived centuries ago. Through time, the reader becomes connected to the author as though they are both a part of the human race's collective mind. Even if the author could not have predicted the future, she nevertheless provided food for it, just like many insects provide for their unhatched young: "But for the evidence thence afforded to the philosophical doctrine of the identity of all minds," says Emerson, "we should suppose some preestablished harmony, some foresight of souls that were to be, and some preparation of stores for their future wants, like the fact observed in insects, who lay up food before death for the young grub they shall never see." Reading for pleasure nourishes the soul and offers a sense of intellectual contact with the past. Any kind of book can provide intellectual food for the human mind, which is creative and energetic. Scholars should, however, exercise caution when reading, determining for themselves whether passages in a work are true regardless of the time it was written and which are unique to that work. Furthermore, certain subjects, including the sciences, may only be acquired by "laborious reading" and practice in academic settings. But these institutions' main goal should always be to bring brilliant young minds together, let them interact, and promote original thought. Emerson thought that everything else that universities did was just show.

Section 3

There is a common misconception, according to Emerson, that a scholar has to be a hermit and a "valetudinarian," or hypochondriac. According to this perspective, a scholar ought to be someone who avoids physical labour and whose work is solely mental. He thinks that people frequently perceive academics—priests in particular—as effeminate and essentially worthless. He contends that action is a crucial component of research and that without it, the beauty and truth of the world cannot be fully understood. Inaction renders a person incomplete.

People pick up knowledge through experience and through facing life's challenges. By taking on and conquering obstacles, they get the ability to overcome fear. "Drudgery, calamity, exasperation, want," Emerson adds, "are instructors in eloquence and wisdom." People's experiences are always being processed by the mind to create new knowledge and ways of thinking.

A person cannot understand acts as they are taken, even though they can reflect on childhood experiences objectively and emotionally detached. Experiences cannot be translated into a knowledge of universal truths only in retrospect. Without variety in behaviour, ideas become overly limited. The scholar might then discover that the stream of thought they had dedicated their entire lives to had dried up, leaving them with no resources. The scholar is exposed to a wide range of knowledge and terminology in life and in activities outside of the classroom.

But the most important "value of action" is that it serves as a resource for scholars. Like everything in nature, thought and deed fluctuate like the tides, and one enhances the other. There are always resources available to the engaged scholar. There can be no scholarship without living. The world and the scholar's thinking will both be improved if they lead moral and upright lives. Emerson thinks that people are naturally inclined to make beneficial changes. These instincts are not limited by the lessons of civilization; rather, they exist independently of them. He argues that the dynamic heroes of contemporary thought do not come from the archetypes of ancient cultures. At the height of Greek and Roman civilization, the progenitors of both Shakespeare and Alfred the Great (849–99), an English king who valued education, were barbaric and uncivilised. He only imposes one restriction on constructive action: a rational individual should not allow popular morality to override their own judgement. Scholars should trust their own judgement when their own mind and soul tell them what is good and wrong, regardless of what their community or country may say to the contrary.

Conclusion

After discussing the impact of books, nature, and action on the scholar, Emerson suggests talking about the responsibilities of the scholar. The scholarly profession demands assurance and self-belief. A scholar who carefully examines the human mind might not become as well-known right away as, say, renowned astronomers Sir William Herschel (1738–1822) or John Flamsteed (1646–1719), who can give hard data. But even in the face of obscurity, the effort of the scholar remains valuable. Their commitment to academic pursuits might keep them out of the mainstream and without much money or leisure. However, Emerson believed that they were performing the most significant task that people could undertake. It is the responsibility of scholars to listen to their own emotions as well as to

reason in light of contemporary events and to disseminate the information and lessons they have discovered.

Emerson believed that a scholar shouldn't stoop to fit in with the prevailing opinions of their period. They should have faith in their own abilities and their intuition, which they have developed from experience, research, and action. They are not alone in this, even if they think they are. They will realise this when they connect with their audience through their poetry and speeches and they recognise that what they are trying to say is true.

A scholar who has self-trust can be honourable, fearless, and independent. They shouldn't let their fear prevent them from engaging in challenging or contentious debates. They ought to realise that the world's pretence only endures as long as they permit it to. All too frequently, academics are intimidated by the idea that everything is set in stone and that they cannot accomplish anything novel or significant. But the one who can mould the mind is more powerful than the one who can mould substance. Emerson cites some notable intellectuals who, in his opinion, have perfected the skill of communicating the reality of the universe.

Emerson questions whether his listeners will stick with him through to the end. He thinks that humanity is in a degraded state right now and is far apart from the light that could restore it. Few people ever reach their greatest potential. Too many people are happy to remain in the leadership role without ever trying to grow as individuals. Furthermore, power and fortune are thoughtlessly embraced as the pinnacles of human achievement, but if one develops their capacity for independent thought, they will be rejected. The realisation of the universal man that is inside every man ought to be everyone's ultimate ambition. Emerson says, "Each philosopher, each bard, each actor, has only done for me, as by a delegate, what one day I can do for myself." The modern scholar has already read and digested all the great ideas of the past and needs something fresh to be created.

Finally, Emerson discusses the responsibilities and opportunities facing scholars in the modern day. He connects the periods of intellectual development—classical, Romantic, and current "Reflective or Philosophical"—to the phases of a person's life—childhood, adolescence, and maturity. The current era is referred to as "the age of introversion," but Emerson doesn't believe this is always a bad thing. The dissatisfaction of modern intellectuals is rapidly surpassing the concepts of previous generations. Artists and writers are starting to notice beauty and significance in the ordinary lives of people who were previously thought to

be too mundane for attention. These things are every bit as fascinating, amazing, and—above all—true as any epic that has ever been composed. The same universal rules apply to everything, and they are interconnected. Emerson mentions philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) in particular, citing him as one of the greatest intellectuals of the day. He made an effort to develop a comprehensive ethical theory of contemporary Christianity and focused especially on uncomfortable but real issues like fear, dirt, and mental illness.

The emphasis on the individual and the intrinsic rights of every person makes the modern era noteworthy as well. According to Emerson, things should be this way. "If there be one lesson more than another, which should pierce his ear," he continues, "it is, The world is nothing, the man is all." Because they are all capable of learning from and interpreting the world, each person possesses all the wisdom and knowledge they require. Despite current forecasts to the contrary, the American Scholar will lead the next wave of thought because of this democratic attitude. People believe that America is too focused on greed, that its professors are too timid, and that it is intellectually enslaved to Europe. The most brilliant brains in the nation are crushed by the culture of greed, drudgery, and complacency; some even commit themselves as a result. But the true American scholar's unwavering conviction is the cure for this. They have the power to uplift the entire country if they bravely stand up for what is right and moral. For the first time in human history, a group of fully realised people may encourage and uplift one another as well as the entire planet.

Critical Analysis

The Fable of the Divided Man

The story that Ralph Waldo Emerson references in the first line of "The American Scholar" is a paraphrase of a statement made by the Greek dramatist Aristophanes (c. 450–c. 388 BCE) in Plato's (c. 428–c. 348 BCE) Symposium. According to the original tale, humans were created back-to-back by the gods, and true love resulted from them actually finding each other. Emerson's rendition departs greatly from the source. An entire, flawless human being was divided into pieces in this allegory in order to carry out beneficial work.

One of the pioneers of the transcendentalism movement was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Transcendentalism's central claim is that each and every individual possesses a genuine, universal wisdom that may be realised by introspection. This idea is captured in the fable of the divided man. Like five fingers extending from a single hand, humans in the analogy arise

from a similar source but are separated and move individually. Regardless of their direction of motion, they will always be a part of the same structure.

But the danger of the split man is that, trapped as they are in their allotted roles, they lose sight of their relationship to the body as a whole. They only perceive themselves as fingers, not as a component of a hand, by analogy. "The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk and strut about so many walking monsters," Emerson writes, "a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man." They fail to recognise that they are a member of a living community, and to make matters worse, decades of continued division and power disparities have kept individuals in increasingly limited positions. Moreover, individuals frequently only comprehend the specific drudgery needed of them in order to complete their jobs—not their own agency. They are not complete men as a result, and at worst they are just tools.

The listener can more readily understand the analysis and the underlying idea thanks to the allegory's framework. The story gains significance when it is couched in terms of an old fable. This helps to emphasise Emerson's claim that truth is available to all eras of history, albeit not equally.

Rhetorical Devices

As a Unitarian pastor, Ralph Waldo Emerson had a long history of practicing public speaking. As such, many of the strategies he employed in his speech were intended to make his point clear to the audience. Emerson's point is emphasised in "The American Scholar" through the use of metaphor, allegory, rhetorical questions, contrasted contrasts, and repetition.

With its emphasis on oral communication, "The American Scholar" frequently repeats key phrases, most notably "Man Thinking," which, when clarified, stands for the idea of authentic research as an all-encompassing and dynamic mental endeavour. Parallel construction is frequently used in sentences. Examples of such sentences are "Him Nature solicits with all her placid, all her monitory pictures," and "There are creative manners, there are creative actions, and creative words; manners, actions, words, that is, indicative of no custom or authority." The past gives him instructions. The future calls him." Spoken aloud, these repetitions bring to mind hymns and sermons and connect concepts through resemblances in rhythm and sound. They lend the discourse a poetic character and help with memorization of spoken material. In identifying the attributes of the scholar, the speech also

structurally repeats itself, alternating somewhat predictably between instances of good scholarly development and instances of bad scholarly growth. The speech's middle section flows more naturally because to its steady cadence.

Emerson uses contrast to list the advantages and possible pitfalls of each stage of development as he explains what scholars are and how they evolve. He believes that there are proper and improper ways to further one's education. A true scholar, for instance, will use books to engage with and wisely apply concepts from the past, but a scholar who misapplies the lesson will only reiterate concepts they have already learned from books without contributing anything new. The scholar's opposing and matched points of view serve to rhetorically support Emerson's arguments. They function as a lyrical repetition and elucidate his thoughts by offering counterexamples, which helps the reader remember the argument's structure and flow.

Emerson, like many speakers, pauses his discourse at important moments to pose rhetorical questions to the audience. The direct address to the audience creates the impression of a discussion even though the questions are not meant to be replied vocally. It also suggests that the listener is invited to participate, even if silently. Emerson most frequently presents arguments he wants to refute via rhetorical inquiry, as in "Is it so horrible then? The last thing to be pitied is sight. Were we to become blind? Do we worry that we will become blind to God and nature and ignore the truth?" Throughout his lecture, he promotes intellectual innovation, and many of his queries touch on accepted knowledge or agreement. Emerson asks the audience to consider the topic for themselves, knowing full well that they will not all agree with him.

Emerson employs extensive metaphors in the form of allegories in addition to brief, condensed metaphors. Although "The Divided Man" is the most well-known allegory, he also makes reference to everything having two handles—a right and a wrong one. His allegories aid in the clarification of difficult concepts and give greater points a framework. His more concise analogies offer the speech's thematic resonance as well as tangible visuals to support his claims. For instance, he equates ideas like passing along knowledge from one generation to the next with the life cycles of insects in a speech asserting that the human intellect and nature have a common origin. His claims on how human intuition may discern truth from nature and the interconnectedness of all things are supported by the parallel between insect life and human intellect.

Scholarly Allusions

Emerson makes references to a body of knowledge and literary works that his well-read audience would have been familiar with throughout the speech. Readers of now can learn what concepts would have been significant and influential throughout the speech's period of time thanks to these allusions. Emerson anchors himself, his arguments, and his audience in an intellectual history that they, as scholars, are currently preserving by calling upon the writers and philosophers of the past. Moreover, Emerson's claim that ideas of value and merit to the reader might originate from any era if chosen with discernment is illustrated rhetorically by the arrangement of references to notable people.

Throughout the speech, Emerson collects references to people from different fields and eras to make general points and to illustrate the visible patterns he claims are the basis of scholarly knowledge. He states, for instance, that "Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views, which Cicero, John Locke, and Bacon have given, forgetting that Cicero, John Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books," in the section on blindly adhering to written and accepted wisdom. In the 19th century, Cicero (106–43 BCE), John Locke (1632–1704), and Roger Bacon (1220–92) would have been essential components of a Western education; nevertheless, they were all several centuries apart and had different interests. During the first century BCE, Cicero was a stoic Roman orator; during the 18th century, Locke was a social philosopher and a well-known thinker; and in the 13th century, Bacon was a proponent of the scientific method. But Emerson is highlighting the fact that intellectual innovation occurs in every century by providing these varied examples. Similarly, he shorthands the finest aspects of British culture by employing the metonymy (using a related term to substitute for a notion) of William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and Alfred the Great (849–99), despite the fact that the king and the playwright never met. Shakespeare is paired with the Greek philosopher Plato as well. In addition to matching like with like, his list of notable and relatively recent scientists at the time of the speech—Carl Linnaeus (1707–78), Humphry Davy (1778–1829), and Georges Cuvier (1769–1832)—also links scholars from different fields together under the overarching theme of great minds and intellectual leaders. Even though no names are given, Emerson's opening reference to scientists, Greek athletes, and troubadours accomplishes the same thing by connecting his Harvard audience with groups of remarkable individuals throughout history. All of this serves to emphasise the idea that human learning is cumulative and that

the speech's audience is the next generation of great tradition bearers. He conveys this idea not in an abstract way but rather as a living, breathing group of brilliant thinkers from history.

Not every name fits into this pattern, and occasionally Emerson uses a more instructive tone. In particular, his discussion of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) gives the impression that he does not assume his audience is knowledgeable about the subject and instead invites them to learn more. The authors he mentions are not metaphors for other ideas; rather, they are samples of common people's writing. These still add to the piece's overall atmosphere, which is one of celebration for the intellectual heritage being passed down to the audience.

Mother Tongue – Amy Tan

About the Author

American novelist Amy Tan was born in Oakland, California, on February 19, 1952. Her works focus on Chinese American women and the experience of immigration.

Tan studied English and linguistics at San Jose State University (B.A., 1973; M.A., 1974) and the University of California, Berkeley. She was born and raised in California and Switzerland. When she travelled back to China with her mother, a Chinese immigrant, in 1987, she was a very successful independent business writer. Tan met her two half-sisters there for the first time; this encounter and the subsequent travel served as inspiration for a portion of her debut book, The Joy Luck Club (1989; film 1993). In the book, four Chinese moms and their Chinese American daughters discuss their experiences and the difficulties they have in connecting with one another due to their different cultural backgrounds and generations.

Inspired by her mother's past, her second book, The Kitchen God's Wife (1991), explores the interaction between a Chinese mother who awkwardly adopts American customs and her fully Americanized daughter. An American woman eventually comes to value her Chinese half-sister and the information she transmits in the 1995 film The Hundred Secret Senses. In The Bonesetter's Daughter (2001), Tan once more examined the nuanced interactions between mothers and daughters as a lady takes care of her mother, who has Alzheimer's disease. An eccentric San Francisco art dealer tells the tale of a party of travellers passing through China and Myanmar (Burma) in Saving Fish from Drowning

(2005). The 2013 film The Valley of Amazement presented the tales of an American businesswoman who establishes a posh brothel in Shanghai and her courtesan-trained daughter. A chapter from the book, Rules for Virgins, was released as an e-book in 2011.

Tan is also the author of the children's books The Moon Lady (1992) and The Chinese Siamese Cat (1994; later made into a television series in 2001), as well as the collection of essays The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings (2003). 2017 saw the release of Where the Past Begins: A Writer's Memoir.

Summary

Amy Tan gives her personal thoughts on the English language at the opening of her essay. She talks about a recent speech she delivered where she was confronted with the reality that the formal standard English she was speaking in the public speech did not align with the way she interacted with her mother at home after discovering her mother was in the audience. She then draws a comparison between this and an incident in which she spoke to her mother while they were strolling down the street, using the more formal, clipped English that she usually uses when speaking to her and her spouse.

Tan refers to this as a "intimacy language." She makes the observation that her mother is well-read and has access to information that Tan cannot even begin to comprehend. However, a lot of people who listen to her mother talk only understand parts of what she says, and some claim they don't understand anything at all, as if she were speaking to them in pure Chinese.

Since it was the first language she learnt and it influenced the way she perceived and understood the world, Tan refers to this clipped informal language as her "mother tongue."

Tan observes that, as a Chinese immigrant to the US, it is hard to come up with a word to characterise the English her mother speaks. Many of the adjectives, such "broken" and "limited," are overly derogatory and suggest that her English is not great.
She admits that she was embarrassed by her mother's speech when she was a child. Her mother used to persuade her daughter to call people and pose as "Mrs. Tan," so it's obvious that she was aware of how her use of language affected how seriously people took her.

She notices that due of the way her mother speaks, she receives different treatment. She describes how the hospital's doctors mistreated her mother when they misplaced the

findings of the CAT scan they had performed on her brain, but they immediately apologised to her daughter when the hospital called her on her mother's demand.

Amy Tan thinks her daughter's academic performance was impacted by her mother's English. Tan admits that although she performed well in single-answer disciplines like physics and arithmetic, she struggled with English. She found it difficult to complete examinations that required students to select the appropriate word to complete a phrase because she was preoccupied with other words' beautiful and imaginative meanings.

Tan speculates that this very reason is probably why many Asian American children are pushed to seek careers in science and maths rather than English. Tan, however, defied this tendency since she is disobedient and enjoys disproving people's presumptions about her. After deciding to major in English in college, she started writing for pay.

She started writing fiction in 1985, and after a few failed attempts to develop her own voice and style, she started to write with her mother in mind as the perfect reader. Yes, her mother did read early drafts of her writing.

Tan also drew on all the Englishes, plural, that she was familiar with, including her mother's "internal" language, which expressed her passion, intent, imagery, and the essence of her thoughts, as well as the "broken" English, "simple" English, and "watered-down" Chinese. Tan knew she had accomplished her writing goals when her mother told her that what she had written was simple to read.

Critical Analysis

Amy Tan's essay's title parodies the term "mother tongue," which denotes a person's native tongue. Tan's mother, whose native tongue was Chinese rather than English, is the one who actually formed her language, or "tongue."

The two women's differing accents are also a result of their respective upbringings: Tan was born in the US, raised and received an education in an English-speaking society, while her mother is a Chinese immigrant.

The Joy Luck Club, written by Tan in 1989, focuses a lot on daughters and their connections with their mothers. The novel's central theme, however, also revolves on Tan's fascination with language—both as a cultural indicator and as a means of expressing ideas and individuality.

In this approach, "Mother Tongue" functions as a sort of postscript to the novel, assuming the tale "Feathers from a Thousand Li Away" serves as the book's introduction. It facilitates our comprehension of Tan's methodology and linguistic choices in the stories that comprise The Joy Luck Club.

Moms moving to America in the hopes that their daughters will have better lives than they did is a recurring motif in Tan's book. This is a crucial section of "Feathers from a Thousand Li Away," and it clarifies Tan's contradictory feelings about her mother's language use, which are covered in "Mother Tongue."

Despite becoming lawful permanent residents of the United States, many of the moms in The Joy Luck Club, like Betty St. Clair in "The Voice from the Wall," feel alone and unwelcome in the country and are acutely conscious of their outsider status. Tan's autobiographical confessions in "Mother Tongue" reveal that her own mother had difficulty being taken seriously by Americans, an issue Tan attributes to her mother's unique speech pattern.

Tan, on the other hand, succeeded in getting herself and her mother regarded seriously by others by using standard English, or what was once referred to, in laden words, as "correct" or "proper" English. Therefore, language is more than just a cultural indicator. Tan shows in "Mother Tongue" how much language can be a weapon of power—or, depending on how it is used, a source of powerlessness—especially for people who are immigrants.

In this regard, it is interesting that Tan decides to concentrate on the exams she took before coming to the conclusion that her mother's "broken" English has been misinterpreted by others, not only literally (by certain individuals who have known her), but also in terms of the false impressions it has caused to be formed about her.

Tan's powerful final words in "Mother Tongue," which show her trying to capture the passion of her mother, the "nature of her thoughts," and the imagery she uses—all things that her daughter has obviously inherited a respect for and which school tests fail to capture or observe—contrast sharply with the class tests at school that reduced English proficiency to the ability to recognise a "correct" answer.

Walden “Chapter XI – Pond” – Henry David Thoreau

About the Author

On July 12, 1817, Henry David Thoreau was born in Concord, Massachusetts. At a young age, he was brought to the countryside, and this initial encounter with the natural world ignited a lifelong fascination. Even though his family barely made ends meet by selling pencils for a modest profit, Thoreau was able to attend Harvard University and quickly established himself as an individualist. Following his graduation in 1837, he worked as a schoolteacher for a number of years and helped his father with the family company.

Thoreau received an invitation to move in with Ralph Waldo Emerson, a neighbour, in 1841. There, he started gatherings with the now-famous Transcendentalist Club, which featured Margaret Fuller, George Ripley, and A. Bronson Alcott. While residing at the Emerson residence, Thoreau wrote essays and poems for The Dial, a Transcendentalist periodical, and performed odd labour like gardening and fence repair. On Emerson's property near Walden Pond, he started constructing a tiny home in 1845, where he lived for more than two years, "sucking out all the marrow of life." His travels served as the inspiration for two books he wrote: A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers and his masterpiece Walden, which promoted a simple, self-sufficient way of living.

Though in his early years Thoreau saw himself primarily as a poet, he eventually became discouraged from pursuing this career path and gradually began to feel that poetry was too limiting. Thoreau's most significant contributions as a stylist and philosopher came from his work as a prose writer. Thoreau, a tireless defender of the human spirit against the materialism and conformity he perceived as prevailing in American culture, is credited with inspiring writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Marcel Proust, Sinclair Lewis, and Henry Miller. His ideas about individual resistance, as outlined in his 1849 essay "Civil Disobedience," have also influenced writers like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. The self-described "inspector of snowstorms and rainstorms," who was mostly disregarded in his own day, is now regarded as one of America's greatest writers.

In his native Concord, Thoreau passed away on May 6, 1862, from TB.

Summary

The story of Walden tells the story of the two years that Henry David Thoreau lived simply in the woods close to Concord, Massachusetts, building his own hut and growing his

own food. Thoreau believed that the diversions of daily living could cause one to lose sight of one's genuine self. In the isolation, quiet, and leisure of his reduced life, he experimented with removing those distractions, living intentionally rather than instinctively, and pursuing his inner desires. He moved away from the unnecessary in order to investigate what was left of the essence of human identity, presuming that it is not determined by one's occupation, material belongings, or social standing.

Walden is a masterful reconstruction of diary entries from Thoreau's time spent in the woods, who was a devoted journal-keeper for the entirety of his life. It is a masterwork by one of the greatest transcendentalist authors. The idealistic premise that there is a true self to be discovered is one of the reasons Walden is a model work of transcendentalism. In some respects, Walden is a Transcendentalist masterpiece as well. It is the documentation of a diverse intelligence examining life from a variety of angles. Thoreau was a keen observer and lover of nature; Walden describes the seasons, animals, and plants of the Concord woods as seen through the eyes of a naturalist. In addition, Thoreau was a sharp and ruthless social critic. Walden's criticisms of the mindless conformity, hypocrisy, and debasement of human spirit that alienated him from the society around him are many. Thoreau was well-versed in Eastern philosophy and religion; Walden is among the first works to introduce the Eastern ideals of simplicity, mindfulness, detachment, and living in the present to a Western audience.

Thoreau discusses some of his Walden Pond activities in chapter 9. He'd take a stroll up Fair Haven Hill to gather huckleberries, which he'd then cook for dinner. He enjoyed fishing occasionally, usually by himself and sometimes with a friend. He really liked to fish at night when he could hear the noises of foxes, owls, and other wildlife. Other times he would just sit and play his flute or watch the fish and birds from his boat.

The ponds surrounding Thoreau's cabin are also described in great detail. Of them, of course, he pays the greatest attention to Walden. He characterises it as a little, clear pond with white stones on its shore and sand on the bottom that is occasionally quite deep. It measures around two miles in circumference and half a mile in length. It is surrounded by steep hills that provide enough shade to allow the pond to maintain a beautiful blue-green hue most of the time. Thoreau utilises the pond's water for bathing and drinking, complimenting it on its purity. Even at thirty feet or deeper, he says he can see the bottom. He even goes into detail

on the species that inhabits the pond and its surroundings, as well as its history and constitution.

There are other ponds in the vicinity, not just Walden. Thoreau believes that White Pond is the most beautiful of them all since it is incredibly pristine and has not been tainted by human habitation. Sandy Pond, also known as Flint's Pond, is the largest pond in the area, spanning 197 acres, and is situated close to Lincoln. Goose and Fair Haven Ponds are also nearby. Thoreau refers to ponds as the earth's precious crystals in the final section of this chapter, which is essentially an ode to ponds in general. He even says that if they were gems and could be restrained, they would be taken and offered as gifts to all the emperors in the world. He laments that not many people recognise the ponds' natural beauty.

Thoreau's long, meticulous descriptions of the pond demonstrate his profound respect for it and his belief in its spiritual magnificence as a component of the natural world. He can experience a similar sense of seclusion in the company of another person as he can in nature when he goes fishing with his friend and they don't say anything.

Thoreau believes that there are traces near the pond that were left by native hunters. An Indian folktale states that while a group was having a pow-wow on a hill and using foul language, the hill suddenly fell, turning into a depression that engulfed the entire gathering with the exception of a woman named Walden. The pond is referred to by Thoreau as "earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature." He views the water as "as sacred as the Ganges," yet the people just use it to wash their dishes by pumping it into town.

Thoreau considers himself to be somewhat connected to the historical indigenous hunters who revered the land and understood its spiritual significance. The legend that describes how those who swear near the pond were swallowed up demonstrates the Indians' view of the water as sacred. However, the locals further denigrate the pond by not only using it to wash their dishes, but also by not acknowledging or appreciating its hallowed beauty. They do this without even cursing near it. On the other hand, Thoreau thinks that by staring into the water, he can discover more about himself.

Critical Analysis

The best way to characterise "The Ponds" is as a collection of metaphors intended to shed light on Thoreau's notion of the perfect self, or soul. He presents a circumstance that the

reader should be familiar with in order to draw the reader's attention to the narrator's self. Because of the dialectical nature of the circumstance, the narrator must reconcile two seemingly incompatible facets of life, bringing them together through synthesis or integration. Three times before, the narrator has presented a situation similar to this one: in "Sounds," he had to resolve a conflict between the worlds of Nature and the Machine, symbolised by the noisy train; in "The Bean-field," he united and united the worlds of Nature and Civilization; and in "Visitors," he introduced a conflict that also opens this chapter through the character of the woodchopper. It will be remembered that although the woodchopper's naturalness made him admirable, his lack of spiritual awareness made him less than perfect. Both of these attributes are what the narrator longs for in his life; he feels that a person should be both natural and spiritual (supernatural). He aspires to unite these two seemingly disparate realms of spirit and nature inside himself.

The narrator tells us, in a symbolic opening to "The Ponds," that he has achieved this synthesis inside himself. He describes how he experienced this integration while nighttime fishing: "It was very strange, particularly on gloomy nights when your mind had drifted to expansive and cosmic themes in other realms, to feel this slight jolt that interrupted your dreams and restored your connection to the natural world." It appeared as though I could throw my line both down into this comparatively less dense element and upward into the air next. As a result, I was able to catch two fish with one hook." He has incorporated the worlds of Spirit and Nature into himself, thus his "lines" are connected to them. Furthermore, take note of the location where the two "lines" converge: Walden Pond, which serves as a metaphor for the narrator's now-fulfilled, integrated self. The narrator later reiterates this symbolic comparison between Walden Pond and his idealised self in a little lyric, saying, "I am its stony shore /... And its deepest resort / Lies high in my thought." He reiterates once more that a pond that is "intermediate in its nature between the land and sky" represents his soul, which is a part of both Nature and Spirit.

We can proceed to a fruitful interpretation of the narrator's description of the pond by keeping this metaphorical relationship in mind. The narrator describes the pond in four primary ways, each of which serves as a metaphor for his idealised soul:

The Pond at Walden is pure. Thus far in Walden, there have been a lot of purifying metaphors offered. Up until now, the storyteller has refrained from indulging in ostentatious delicacies and has meticulously selected his meals. He stays away from meat and other "non-

spiritual" foods. Similar to the snake, he has cleansed himself by rejecting the tainted effects of his past and the culture. The frequency of his baths has also consistently highlighted his attempt at spiritual purification. It is therefore not unexpected that the pond is "so remarkable for its depth and purity." He states over and over again that the water is "so transparent," "the bottom is pure sand," "it is pure at all times," and "all the fish which inhabit this pond are much cleaner, handsomer, and firmer fleshed than those in the river and most other ponds, as the water is purer." The well is clear and deep green.

Its heavenly essence. We have already talked about how the supernatural communicates with humans through nature. We have also talked about the idea that with spiritual elevation, man becomes divine. As a result, we perceive the pond metaphor to be communicating the concept of divinity in two ways: first, as a means of divine expression, and second, as a metaphor that conveys the narrator's own divinity. We read that the pond has "obtained a patent of heaven to be the only Walden Pond in the world and distiller of celestial dews." Being hallowed, it is by definition "sky water," "God's Drop," and so never profane: "I doubt if it is ever profaned by the wing of a gull, like Fair-Haven." The narrator comes to the conclusion that Walden has retained its divine quality while reflecting on his early visits: "The same thought is welling up to its surface that was then; it is the same liquid delight and happiness to itself and its Maker, ay, and it may be to me. Undoubtedly, the work was done by a courageous individual who without any malice! He shaped this water with his palm, made it clearer and deeper in his mind, and left it to Concord in his will." By using the metaphor of the pond, the narrator explains that he is the manifestation of the divine mind and that his greatest ideas are of a divine character, having been "deepened and clarified" by God's mind.

An allegory about motivation. The literal meaning of the word "inspiration" is the infusion of spirit into a person's soul, leading to an elevated mental and emotional condition. Considering this, we may understand how the pond was described as his inspired self. He makes the important claim that "the spirit in the air is betrayed by a field of water." It constantly receives fresh vitality and movement from above." The typical metaphor for inspiration is an overflowing spring, and the narrator refers to a place in this chapter multiple times as "where a spring welled up from the bottom." The narrator repeatedly emphasises that "Walden has no visible inlet or outlet" to highlight the inspirational nature of the place. As the narrator well knows, no one can objectively describe the precise way in which one

receives inspiration. However, the narrator does illustrate how inspiration comes and passes within him using the metaphor of the pond. The narrator has often been spotted in moments of great inspiration. However, his state of pleasure has fluctuated over time. The narrator repeatedly alludes to the pond's fluctuating depth, saying things like "it had begun to rise and fall," "the pond rises and falls," and "this rise and fall of Walden."

The metaphor of spiritual vision as eyes. "It may be simply the result of the prevailing blue mixed with the yellow of the sand," the narrator says early in his description of the pond in reference to the colour of Walden's water. That is how its iris is coloured." Using the word "iris," he presents the eye metaphor. The narrator goes on to elaborate on the eye metaphor when he says, "It is the earth's eye, looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature." The narrator investigates it as well. He is frequently observed "looking directly down into our waters from a boat." The use of the phrase "our waters" is fitting because the narrator is metaphorically looking inward and observing himself in this passage. It should be noted that the narrator sees this self as an eye that gazes towards heaven. In Thoreau's portrayal, the conscious mind—one type of "eye" or vision—is shown peering into the unconscious, the deepest part of oneself, the self that intuitively perceives or knows God—the other type of "eye" being non-rational, spiritual vision. The narrator thus implies that he is conscious of a spiritual vision faculty inside himself; that is, he is asserting that he possesses the capacity to view the divine. It's also noteworthy because the narrator, who is looking into the "pond," is in the line of sight of this allegory's "eye"—the eye that sees the divine. Here is yet another illustration of the narrator's celestial essence.

There are plenty other ways to interpret the pond as a metaphor for the narrator herself. Rejuvenation is expressed by the statement, "it is perennially young." "The constant welling-up of its fountain, the gentle pulsing of its life, the heaving of its breast" describes the narrator's regular emotional state. It symbolises innocence before Adam and Eve were thrown out of Eden: "Maybe Walden Pond was already in existence that spring morning when Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden," and maybe it "had not heard of the fall," remaining pure from "original sin." We may remember from earlier that the narrator spoke about the vast extent of man's nature when we listen to him explain the profound depths of Walden. So, the narrator tells us more about herself through these many analogies.

The manner that "The Ponds" incorporates the seasonal metaphor into its metaphoric weave is among its most intriguing features. As we have discussed previously, there is a

relationship between the narrator's "spiritual seasons" and the seasons of the year. "Winter" is drawing near, and the "pond" reflects the shifting weather: "It reflected the sombre November colours of the surrounding hills, instead of the bright tints of October." The narrator's own reflection of this melancholy will be revealed later on, in the winter sections of Walden. As the months pass, the pond will be covered in ice; a "icy shutter" will be drawn across its "broad skylight." In a similar vein, the narrator's own self will become "icy" and will be sealed off from "the spirit that is in the air," just like the pond. The narrator's euphoria will eventually fade. However, he won't give up since he knows there will be a "thaw" come spring. And the pond will serve as an example of why he believes that his spiritual life will endure, as shown by the saying, "A bright green weed is brought up on anchors even in midwinter." In the same way that Walden's natural life endures the winter, the narrator's supernatural, spiritual life will endure his "winter"; note that the anchor is a symbol of hope in Christian iconography, and green denotes both vitality and hope. Walden Pond, then, is a metaphor that exposes a lot of the narrator's own characteristics.

The narrator first describes Walden before moving on to discuss the other bodies of water nearby. None compare to Walden, as one could imagine. Like its owner, Flint's Pond is "comparatively shallow" and "not remarkably pure." White Pond is a "gem of the woods... a lesser twin of Walden," while Goose Pond is "of small extent." Not much can be said about Fair-Haven Bay. There is only one Walden, both as the narrator's idealised self and as a real pond. This makes sense because the narrator only knows himself as the idealised version of himself. As he told us in "Economy": "I should not talk so much about my-self if there were anybody else whom I knew as well." This is confirmed by the fact that almost the whole of "The Ponds" is devoted to describing the metaphor for himself.

Unit – III Drama

Death of a Salesman – Arthur Miller

About the Author

American playwright Arthur Miller was born in New York City on October 17, 1915, and passed away in Roxbury, Connecticut, on February 10, 2005. Miller blended societal consciousness with a deep care for the interior lives of his characters. His most well-known film is 1949's Death of a Salesman.

The Great Depression, which devastated his father, a tiny manufacturer, and made him aware of the precariousness of contemporary life, had a profound impact on Miller. Following his high school graduation, he was employed at a warehouse. Using the money he earned, he started writing plays while pursuing his B.A. at the University of Michigan in 1938. His first major hit was the anti-Semitic novel Focus (1945; film 1962 [made-for-television]). His first major play was All My Sons (1947; film 1948), a drama about a maker of defective war materials that bears a strong Henrik Ibsen influence. It brought Miller a Tony Award and was his first significant working relationship with Tony-winning director Elia Kazan.

Death of a Salesman, Miller's following piece, rose to prominence as one of the most well-known American plays of its day. It's the tragedy of Willy Loman, a man ruined by ideals that, for the most part, mirrored those of his community. It was crucial to Miller that "the common man" be at the core of a tragedy.

Since he was a teenager and penned a narrative about a Jewish salesperson, Miller had been experimenting with the themes that eventually became Death of a salesperson. He also relied on recollections of an uncle. The play was written by him in 1948, and under Kazan's direction, it debuted in New York City in February 1949. In addition to winning a Pulitzer Prize for drama and a Tony Award for best play, the play also earned individual Tony Awards for writer and director, respectively, for Miller and Kazan. Later, the play was revived multiple times on Broadway and adapted for the cinema (1951, along with several made-for-television adaptations).

The witchcraft trials in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692–1693 served as the inspiration for Miller's 1953 novel The Crucible. At the time, McCarthyism was a popular political movement, and Miller saw these persecutions as a resemblance to the witchcraft trials. It

earned a Tony for best play even though it wasn't as well-liked as Death of a Salesman. It was been repeatedly adapted for television and film. When Miller was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1956, he declined to identify the individuals he had seen at a purported communist authors' gathering ten years prior. He was found guilty of contempt, but he successfully appealed.

1955 saw the staging of A Memory of Two Mondays on the same bill as another short play, A View from the Bridge, about an Italian-American docker whose love for his niece drives him to madness. (A View from the Bridge was performed in a lengthier, altered version a year later.) Despite Miller's denials, After the Fall, which debuted in January 1964, was widely perceived as mostly autobiographical because it explores human relationship failure and its large- and small-scale repercussions through the lens of McCarthyism and the Holocaust. Set in Vichy France and exploring Jewish identity, Incident at Vichy had a limited run beginning at the end of 1964. Miller's examination of the issue of guilt and responsibility towards oneself and others was carried out in The Price (1968), which focused on the tense connection between two brothers. In 1969, he oversaw the play's production in London.

The 1977 production of The Archbishop's Ceiling in Washington, D.C., explored how the Soviet Union treated dissident writers. At the 1980 American Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina, a group of dramatic vignettes titled "The American Clock" were presented. They were based on Studs Terkel's Hard Times, a book about the Great Depression. The Ride Down Mount Morgan (1991), Mr. Peters' Connections (1998), and Resurrection Blues (2002) were among Miller's later plays.

In addition, Miller created the script The Misfits for Marilyn Monroe, his second wife, whom he wed from 1956 to 1961. John Huston directed and starred in the 1961 picture The Misfits, which also featured Clark Gable. The play Finishing the Picture (2004) was based on the filming of this film. His book of short tales, I Don't Need You Any More, was published in 1967. A collection of his theatre articles followed in 1977. Timebends, his autobiography, was released in 1987. Miller was awarded the 2001 Praemium Imperiale medal for theater/film by the Japan Art Association.

Summary

The play Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller explores identity loss and a man's resistance to change in both himself and society. The final act of the play is a collage of memories, dreams, conflicts, and fights.

A day in the life of Willy Loman. The drama ends with Willy killing himself and having a funeral.

Willy, Linda, Biff, and Happy are the members of the Loman family, which Miller utilises to create a self-sustaining loop of denial, contradiction, and order vs chaos. Miller concentrates on the affair and its aftermath to show how people may be defined by a single incident and their subsequent attempts to conceal or destroy the event. Willy had an affair more than 15 years before the genuine time within the play. For instance, before learning of the affair, Biff, Willy's son, thought everything Willy said, loved him, and even accepted his belief that anything is possible if one is "well-liked." When Biff discovers that Willy is cheating on Linda, it makes him reassess both Willy and his worldview. Biff comes to the realisation that Willy has fabricated an identity for himself, his family, and society. It is a common misconception that Willy is a flawless salesperson, a devoted spouse, or an unbreakable father. He is conceited. His wife is not appreciated by him. Furthermore, he is unable to accept that his achievement is really minimal. As a result, Willy dreams about missed chances to become wealthy, famous, and well-known. That being said, it would be inaccurate to say that Miller only has criticism for Willy. Rather, Miller shows how one person can start a self-sustaining loop that then spreads to involve many people. Within the Loman family, this is unquestionably the situation. Willy essentially erases the affair from his mind and lives a life of denial until the play's conclusion. Since he can't recall what happened, it makes sense that he can't comprehend why his connection with Biff has altered. Willy continues to crave Biff's love and devotion, but the two are incessantly at odds. Willy wavers, at times complimenting Biff's physical prowess and ambition, at other times bemoaning his incompetence and lethargy.

Happy and Linda become entangled in the denial cycle as well. Linda is aware of Willy's tendency to reconstruct reality, but she also sees signs that Willy may not be able to accept reality, as seen by his multiple suicide attempts before the play opens. Because of this, Linda decides to uphold Willy's delusions as true, even if doing so means ignoring reality or upsetting her kids. Another outcome of Willy's thinking is Happy.

He twists the truth, just like Willy, to make his own world more appealing. Happy demonstrates how he has adopted Willy's habit of falsifying information when he claims to be the assistant buyer to everyone, despite the reality that he is merely the assistant to the assistant.

It's interesting that Miller leaves out the details of Willy's sales background. Instead of highlighting "what" Willy sells, Miller decides to highlight the fact that Willy is a "salesman." Miller thereby emphasises the significance of Willy's predicament. The audience may relate to Willy since he is an explorer and dreamer, having conquered a region in New England. Everyone has dreams, aspirations, and objectives.

Willy's failure to realise his American goal of success is the cause of his dejection. When Willy first opened the business in the England, he was a somewhat successful salesman, and Biff and Happy thought he was a great father.

However, Biff loses both his respect for Willy and his own drive to succeed after learning about the affair. Willy tries to relive earlier events in an attempt to capitalise on prior success as he gets older and finds it harder to make sales. Willy becomes unable to discriminate between fact and fiction, which makes him socially isolated and makes it harder for him to thrive in the here and now. As the play goes on, Willy's life gets increasingly chaotic, and he is compelled to go almost entirely into the past, where he may reconstruct events or experience prior memories, where there is order.

The play's ability to serve as a mirror for spectators means that it will always have an impact on them. An audience can identify with Willy's feelings of self-loathing, failure, and overwhelming remorse because they are universal emotions that everyone has had at some point. When faced with hardship, most people do not end their lives, yet Willy's extreme actions make him relatable to many. Because Willy feels like he has no choice but to end his life, the viewer might respond sympathetically to him. However, if the audience feels that Willy has abandoned his family and chosen the easy route, they can respond to him with contempt and rage.

In any case, people keep responding to Death of a Salesman since Billy's circumstances are not unusual: He committed a mistake that forever altered his relationship with the people he loves the most, and after exhausting all other options for fixing the error, he makes one last, huge effort. Willy angrily refutes Biff's assertion that they are both regular, everyday people, yet ironically, the play's ongoing appeal stems from its universality. It turns out that Biff is right when he says, "I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you."

Critical Analysis

Miller presents the three main ideas of Death of a Salesman—denial, contradiction, and order versus disorder—in Act I, Scene 1. Willy arrives home early from a sales trip, and Linda asks him jokingly whether he crashed the car. Willy's irritated reply to Linda's query implies that they have had this conversation previously. He doesn't justify himself; instead, he acknowledges candidly that he was unable to focus while driving. He actually forgot that he was driving a few times. Willy is tired, both emotionally and physically, and he knows something is wrong with him.

The nature of Willy and Linda's relationship is established in Scene 1. Even if Willy explains all that happened, Linda gives him chances to refute any problems. She's trying to shield him from his own flaws in this way. She suggests that Willy may not be able to drive correctly because of the defective steering on the Studebaker and his glasses. Linda keeps Willy's support going by giving him justifications for his actions and Biff's failure to hold down a consistent job. With the exception of sporadic epiphanies, as the conclusion of Scene 1, when he inquires as to whether she is concerned about him, Willy mostly ignores Linda and takes her for granted. Unless they are alone together, Willy freely criticises Linda and her opinions for the most of the play.

As the drama develops, Willy finds it difficult to make sense of what is happening right now and his recollections of the past. Willy believes that the splendour of earlier occasions ought to serve as a forerunner to the actuality of the present. Put another way, he should still be able to enjoy the lovely recollections of achievement and order that he has of them. For instance, Willy feels that because he founded the business, named his own boss, and established it across New England, he ought to be appreciated and acknowledged at work. But because he can no longer effectively sell products, he is not regarded. In Willy's new world of the profit margin, everything he once found significant—like previous sales records and friendships—have no bearing.

These conflicts reflect a continuous aspect of Willy's character rather than being inconsistencies in his viewpoint. He alters memories, facts, and information to suit his perfect interpretation of reality. Willy becomes offended and furious when someone disagrees with him. His frustration is at "always being contradicted." Throughout the play, his son Biff is the one who "contradicts" him the most. Willy feels his son is squandering his life away working on a Texas farm, so he criticises Biff for it, but Linda stands up for Biff because he's still

"finding himself." Willy views Biff's volatility as a reflection of his character and laziness, but after reminiscing about Biff from high school, Willy's perception of Biff shifts. When they first started talking, Willy called Biff "a lazy bum," yet a little while later, he contradicts himself and calls Biff a "hard worker." Willy feels that Biff can never be a letdown now because of his success and popularity in high school. He brings his recollections of Biff from the past into the present, persuading himself that his son will influence people in the same way that he did as a high school football player, whether he works as a salesperson or a farmhand. Stated differently, Willy denies the truth and instead fabricates a far more agreeable other reality because he finds it too painful to face his son's predicament. In this sense, Willy brings order out of chaos by twisting the truth to support a superior conclusion.

A Streetcar Named Desire – Tennessee Williams

About the Author

Tennessee Williams was an American dramatist whose plays depict a world of human misery where sex and violence underlying an air of romantic gentility. Williams was born in Columbus, Mississippi, on March 26, 1911, and passed away in New York City on February 25, 1983.

Williams developed an interest in playwriting while attending Washington University in St. Louis and the University of Missouri in Columbia. He continued to work on the art during the Great Depression while working in a shoe factory in St. Louis. Some of his work was staged by small theatre groups, which inspired him to pursue dramatic writing at the University of Iowa, where he graduated with a B.A. in 1938.

His first accolade was a Group Theatre Prize for American Blues (1939), a collection of one-act pieces. But Williams persisted in working in various occupations, from Hollywood scriptwriter to theatre usher, until breakthrough with The Glass Menagerie (1944). Williams represented a tenement-dwelling, poor Southern family in it. The plot of the play is on Tom, Amanda's cynical son, and their attempts to find a suitor for Laura, Tom's shy and reclusive sister who lives in a fantasy world with a collection of glass animals. Amanda is an overbearing mother who harbours fantasies of a love past.

A Streetcar Named Desire, Williams's second big hit, was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1947. It examines the mental and moral collapse of Blanche DuBois, a fellow Southern belle

whose refined appearance is insufficient to the brutal reality represented by her violent brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski.

The Night of the Iguana (1961), which tells the tale of a defrocked minister turned sleazy tour guide who finds God in a cheap Mexican hotel, and Camino Real (1953), a complex work set in a mythical, microcosmic town whose inhabitants include Lord Byron and Don Quixote, were both successfully filmed. However, his Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1955), which exposes the emotional lies governing relationships in the family of a wealthy Southern planter, was awarded a Pulitzer Prize and successfully adapted for the big screen. In 1958's Suddenly Last Summer, themes of cannibalism, lobotomy, and pederasty are explored; in 1959's Sweet Bird of Youth, the gigolo hero is castrated for causing venereal illness in the daughter of a Southern politician.

Williams experienced numerous health problems in the 1960s, which were exacerbated by years of alcohol and sleeping drug addiction. These issues were difficult for Williams to overcome after suffering a serious mental and physical collapse in 1969. His later plays met with little success and quickly closed to negative reviews. A Lovely Sunday for Crève Coeur (1978–79), about a fading belle in St. Louis during the Great Depression, and Clothes for a Summer Hotel (1980), which focuses on Zelda Fitzgerald, the wife of novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald, and the people they knew, are among them. Vieux Carré (1977) is about down-and-outs in New Orleans.

Williams has authored articles, poetry, short tales, film scripts, memoirs (1975), and two novels, The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone (1950) and Moise and the World of Reason (1975). His writings were widely translated and performed all over the world in addition to winning four Drama Critics' Awards.

Summary

Arriving to visit her sister, Mrs. Stella Kowalski, who resides in New Orleans' French Quarter, is Blanche DuBois. The area appears so shady that it shocks her. As one of the neighbours searches for Stella, Blanche searches the flat for a drink. Blanche criticises the establishment fairly openly when her sister visits. She confesses that she's broken nerves from teaching and has come for a visit. She is hesitant to stay because there are only two rooms in the flat, but she tells Stella that she can't bear being alone herself.

She informs Stella that Belle Reve, their former ancestral house, has vanished. Stanley, Stella's husband, comes in and greets Blanche while she uses the loo. Blanche becomes so angry at his questioning about her past, particularly her previous marriage, that she becomes ill.

The next evening, Stanley plays poker with his pals while Stella and Blanche go out to eat and see a movie. Stanley, though, is curious as to how Belle Reve got lost before they depart. In an attempt to clarify, Blanche hands him over all the relevant paperwork. When Blanche and Stella get back from their movie later that evening, the men are still playing poker. One of Stanley's buddies, Mitch, appears to be more sensitive than the others when Blanche first meets him. Stanley gets upset over a number of things while Mitch is speaking with Blanche in the second room, particularly when Blanche turns on the radio. Stella tries to stop him, but he throws the radio out the window and hits her. The other men have to hold him to prevent him from inflicting more harm. After picking up Stella, Blanche heads upstairs. Stella comes down when Stanley calls for her to, and she does so once he gets better. Blanche approaches Stella the following morning and tries to convince her that Stanley is an animal. That Stella might have gone back to him astounds her. However, Stella reassures her that she loves Stanley and that he was kind to her when she returned. He enters and listens in on the conversation as Blanche starts to describe Stanley, but he stays silent.

After a while, Blanche gets ready for Mitch's date. She tells Stella that she is so over fighting the world that she wants Mitch. Stella tells her that it will occur. Blanche goes with Stanley to go bowling; a paper guy stops by right before Mitch gets there, and she holds him long enough to give him a kiss since he reminds her of her young husband. Upon their return from their date, Blanche tells Mitch how much Stanley seems to despise her. She believes Stanley will be the one to destroy her. She tells Mitch about her previous marriage to a young child, whom she subsequently found out was having an affair with an older man. Later that evening, her young husband took his own life after Blanche made a critical comment to him. Blanche is informed by Mitch that they are mutually dependent.

Mid-September is the later time. Stella is making Blanche a birthday cake. Upon returning home, Stanley informs Stella that he now has the upper hand on Blanche. She was reportedly asked to leave Laurel because of her crazy lifestyle. Blanche had been declared off-limits even by the troops. Then Stanley informs her that Blanche will go on Tuesday via Greyhound bus and that Mitch won't be stopping by. Later on in the evening, Blanche finds it

incomprehensible that Mitch is not there. Following a scenario involving Stella, Stanley gives Blanche a ticket to return to Laurel, Mississippi, as her birthday present. Stella experiences her first labour pains and needs to be brought to the hospital just as Stanley is ready to depart. Mitch shows there later that night. Blanche has been consuming a lot of alcohol. He brings up her previous life with her. She tries to deny it at first, but eventually she admits that nothing seemed to matter to her after her young husband passed away, but for intimate relationships with strangers. Blanche then makes a marriage demand when Mitch tries to convince her to sleep with him. Blanche yells fire to drive Mitch away after he tells her she is not good enough.

When Stanley gets home from the hospital later that evening, he finds Blanche wearing an old, faded evening gown. He informs her that the baby will not arrive before daybreak. Especially when he starts questioning her about all the falsehoods she has told, she becomes too afraid to stay with him. He decides it wouldn't be too horrible to get in the way of her as she tries to manoeuvre around him. A fight breaks out, and he rapes her.

After three weeks, Stella is packing Blanche's belongings and biding her time until a physician and a carer arrive to transport her to the state mental health facility. Stella doesn't think Blanche's account of Stanley raping her is credible. Blanche believes that she is going to be taken on a cruise by an old boy friend. She tries to flee after failing to recognise him when the attendant arrives. Blanche is captured by Stanley and a helper. Blanche is more than happy to accompany the doctor when he approaches because she has always relied on the goodwill of others.

Critical Analysis

A Streetcar Named Desire's main conflict is between two characters who symbolise different social backgrounds, incompatible personalities, and diametrically opposed lifestyles. Blanche DuBois is a delicate, sophisticated woman who is committed to etiquette and appearances. She comes from an aristocratic, decadent family of plantation owners. Her opponent, Stanley Kowalski, is a cruel, tyrannical, and sensual "common" descendant of Polish immigrants. More broadly, the main conflict revolves around Blanche's struggle to live as her family and money, as well as her youth and beauty, become scarce. Blanche describes herself as a “soft” person. Stanley is a metaphor for the harsh reality that gradually undermines Blanche's beliefs.

The events of Streetcar take place as exchanges between Stanley's and Blanche's worlds. As soon as the characters first meet in the play's opening scene, their clashes start. This meeting is pleasant on the surface, but it has a significant exchange: Stanley says, "I never was a very good English student," and Blanche mentions that she teaches English. These phrases make clear how fundamentally different and incompatible they are. A day later, after Blanche is questioned by Stanley over the loss of the DuBois family house, Belle Reve, their first real argument takes place. He is enraged by Blanche's sly actions and her attempts to diffuse the issue. Thus, the war commences, and as both attempt to win over other characters—most notably Stella—tension and animosity between the two grow stronger with each meeting.

In the continuing war, Blanche keeps falling behind. After describing Stanley as an ape-man and pleading with her sister to leave after he hits the expectant Stella during a poker game, Blanche watches as Stella rushes to embrace her husband. Three months later, Stanley makes a passing reference to a man who likely slept with Blanche and knows her via Laurel, leaving her stunned. When Mitch asks her to marry him, Blanche seems to have a tiny victory, but it is fleeting. After just a few weeks, Stanley is in complete control of the obscene details of Blanche's life in Laurel, and he tells Stella and Mitch about them. Blanche suffers another setback as a result of his revelations: Mitch ends their engagement, but he says he still wants to sleep with her, and only her frantic cries stop him.

Shortly after Mitch makes unwelcome moves on Blanche, the pivotal encounter takes place. Blanche and Stanley are alone in the flat for the first time while Stella is in labour at the hospital. Inebriated, Blanche calls Stanley and Mitch "swine," plays host to imagined visitors, and acts as though she received an invitation from an old romantic partner. Stanley rapes her out of anger and arousal. Stanley has physically violated Blanche in order to have "won" their fight, as the play's last scene discloses. After Blanche is committed by Stella, she eventually checks herself into a mental health facility. Blanche has been driven nuts by Stanley in addition to being driven away. Blanche, who seems almost completely divorced from reality, leaves the asylum with a nurse and doctor, not knowing who they are but knowing she can trust strangers to be kind to her.

‘Night, Mother – Marsha Norman

About the Author

One of the most well-known authors of American theatre since the early 1980s is Marsha Norman, a prolific playwright, screenwriter, and novelist. She has a long number of other notable victories, including the Pulitzer Prize, Tony Awards, and others.

As the eldest of two daughters and two sons born to an insurance salesman and a homemaker, Norman grew up in Louisville, close to Audubon Park. She claimed that her solitary upbringing was beneficial for her as a future writer. Her plays frequently explore the complexities and interactions among families.

Norman obtained a master's degree from the University of Louisville after graduating from Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia. She taught in Jefferson County and wrote for Kentucky Educational Television and the Louisville Times.

In 1979, the Actors Theatre of Louisville presented "Getting Out," the first of Norman's fourteen stage plays, before it was presented Off Broadway in New York. In the drama, a young lady convicted of robbery, kidnapping, and manslaughter and sentenced to eight years in jail is given release. Norman's experiences working with troubled teenagers at Louisville's Central State Hospital served as inspiration for it.

Following the New York premiere of her play "'night, Mother," which centres on a divorced lady named Jessie Cates who lives with her mother Thelma Cates, Norman rose to fame. Jessie gently tells Thelma during the course of the evening why she intends to take her own life. Norman was nominated for a Tony Award, received a Drama Desk Award, and won the 1983 Pulitzer Prize in drama for his play.

The piano was Norman's first passion when she was five years old. Years after "'night, Mother" became successful, Norman yearned to write a Broadway musical. When Norman turned Frances Hodgson Burnett's 1911 book "The Secret Garden" into a musical, it was her big break and in 1992 it won her both a Tony and a Drama Desk Award.

She later wrote the book for the Broadway adaptation of Alice Walker's "The Colour Purple," which was nominated for a Tony Award in its first run in 2005. The 2016 Tony Award went to a revived production. The Trumpet of the Swan, The Bridges of Madison County, and The Red Shoes are among her five musical adaptations for the stage.

With credits on more than a dozen productions, Norman has been a prolific writer for both film and television. She was recognised for her work on the HBO series "In Treatment" with a 2009 Peabody Award. She also wrote the 1989 book "The Fortune Teller," which examines parent-child dynamics.

Among Norman's other honours are the William Inge Distinguished Lifetime Achievement in Theatre and the Guild Academy of Arts & Letters Lifetime Achievement Award. The Theatre Hall of Fame counts her among its members. In addition to 18 honorary degrees from American colleges and universities, Norman has earned grants and awards from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

She served as Julliard's co-chair of playwriting for 25 years before retiring in 2020. She resides in Western Massachusetts' Berkshires.

Summary

The opening scene of Marsha Norman's renowned play "Night, Mother" takes place in the kitchen. Mama Thelma and her daughter Jessie, who are the primary protagonists, converse pointlessly about unimportant topics, and Jessie confesses her wish to kill herself that evening. She searches for her father's gun in order to take his life.
Thelma gives her the address without realising what she's going to do, and she finds it in the old shoe box.

When Jessie tells her mother she's going to commit herself while cleaning the antique gun, Thelma first does not believe her. However, as their conversation progresses, she comes to understand that her daughter is sincere in her goals. Then she begins to talk her out of it. She disregards her mother's advice and keeps teaching her how to take care of all household duties even after she passes away. She has even spent years organising their Christmas presents. She begs her Mama Thelma to prepare them some hot chocolate even though no one in her house likes hot chocolate in order to keep her busy.

Jessie never stops talking about her family and her mother's friends. It comes out that she is a mid-thirties, divorced, jobless, attractive, and epileptic. She still loves the man she was divorced from. Her spouse offered her a smoking cessation ultimatum because she was addicted to the habit. She made the decision to divorce her spouse due to her severe smoking addiction. Her son ends up being a heroin addict and robber. Her hopes for the future are now

lost. She is well aware that Thelma, her mother, does not keep her in her house out of love for Jessie, but rather to end her loneliness. There is also a sense of futility because of Mother Thelma's self-interest in keeping Jessie there. Jessie doesn't see any signs of love or optimism for the future.

Thelma tells Jessie that her marriage was unhappy in an attempt to take her mind off of killing herself. She had anticipated a lovely house, a loving and devoted husband, and a wonderful family. But after her spouse passed away, all of her hope turned to ash. She subsequently looks to her son Dawson for the same affection and attention, but once more, Dawson gets married and moves out from Thelma to live with his wife. She keeps her daughter Jessie with her because she feels too alone. She assures Jessie that she is loved and that she shouldn't end her life. Jessie declares that her life will remain the same whether she lives for another fifty years or not. Therefore, it makes no difference to her to stop life now and live for fifty years. She is therefore adamant about her intention to end her life.

Although it is evident from their exchange that Thelma and Jessie love one another, Jessie does not see her mother's love as sufficient justification for life. They haven't shown one other any signs of love up until now. Jessie cannot decide to change her mind now. Thelma begs Jessie to alter their way of life. Her attempts to talk her out of suicide show how much she loves her like a mother.

Thelma, a frantic mother, clings to her daughter in the play's closing minutes and is ignored. With a subdued 'Good night, Mom', Jessie exits the room. She heads to her room and locks herself in. A little while later, there's a gunshot coming from the room, and Thelma starts calling her son Dawson.

Critical Analysis

Marsha Norman's play "night Mother," in contrast to many other plays you have read or watched, centres on just two major characters. The play is told entirely through the thoughts of Mama, the mother, and Jessie, the daughter. The topic of Jessie's plan to kill herself is revealed informally but bizarrely during the most of their chats. We can learn the real psychological identity of the two main characters in "Night Mother." Learning the backstories of these two figures makes you realise that everyone has a unique perspective on life. Having stated that, every person experiences challenges while they are here on Earth. memory loss, maternal control, forced marriage, and desertion. She has never known a world in which these emotions and circumstances have not dictated her every action, which has

somewhat clouded her perception of time.The drama Night Mother is full with tragedy, failed lives, and upheaval. In a way, death is a new life since it represents the release from the shackles of a meaningless and terrible existence.

Thelma Cates, who goes by Mama throughout the play, owns the house on the remote country road where the play is primarily set. The house is crammed with "Mama's" most recent unfinished projects, knitting baskets, and blankets. The tiny house appears to be crammed with Mama's belongings, everywhere you look. Additionally, static-filled set lines provide a sense of confinement inside the stage's footprint. Static lines represent the lifeless, stagnant state Jessie feels inside of herself. demonstrating unequivocally Jessie's sense of alienation from her mother and her sense of separation from her own home.

Overall, this illustrates that even though Jessie has lived with her mother for a considerable amount of time, she lacks the personal relationships and values that allow most people to feel secure in this home. This influences the notion of Jessie's motivation for plotting suicide, which is to cut herself off from her existing life of struggle and repetition since she feels she has no other choice and no one to turn to.

In this piece, suicide appears to be the impetus for Jessie and Mama's eventual communication and openness. While some would start to think that Norman suggests that suicide is a reasonable alternative to enduring a life that one finds intolerable, Jessie's death in the playwright's version is far from that. Norman is merely letting the women in her play talk honestly; she is not at all adopting an authorial attitude. This leads to a tragedy in "Night Mother" because the characters miss out on a lifetime of chances to get to know one another and have a chance to come to an agreement in Jessie's last moments.

Characters in a more traditional tragedy are not able to fully comprehend how much they have lost from one another. which, given that they were living in a little house and were always in close proximity to one another, you would think would be unavoidable. The family's home's location on a remote country road supports the play's central theme of solitude. On the one hand, Thelma is content with her modest rural lifestyle. She was content with whatever she had and never needed more, even if it meant lying to herself.

Conversely, Jessie's life is sought after for far longer than the poor hands she was given. She can't strive to make the most of the life that was given to her and settle for it. Her mother and her are so different from one another that she often feels alone. She can no longer pretend that nothing is happening to her and that she is alone in her universe, just going

through the motions of her boring life. When you imagine a lonely country road, you automatically picture distant neighbours who don't often communicate with each other, making any help that might be brought to Jessie's aid seem hopeless. She can completely stop her suffering with a door lock, and for miles around, nobody will be able to hear or question the gunshot.

To sum up, the location plays a major role in "night Mother." It establishes an atmosphere of mayhem and disconnection from reality. We can examine more closely at how the Cates' home, despite its mess and disorder, reflects Jessie's daily emotions about her life. The rural road this house is situated on contributes to the overall sense of loneliness Jessie faced before deciding to take her own life. The drama "Night Mother" is full with sorrow, failed relationships, and upheaval. Reading it solely at face value is impressive, but when you break it down and enlarge it, you can see beyond the chaos to a deeper meaning.

Unit –IV Fiction

Light in August – William Faulkner

About the Author

Born into an aristocratic southern family, William Faulkner (1897–1962) spent his childhood in Oxford, Mississippi. During World War I, he enlisted in the Canadian and then the British Royal Air Force, attended the University of Mississippi for a spell, and had temporary jobs at a newspaper in New Orleans and a bookshop in New York. Except for sporadic visits to Europe and Asia, and a few brief periods in Hollywood as a screenplay, he worked on his books and short stories on a farm in Oxford.

In an effort to write his own story, Faulkner has created a cast of characters that reflect the South's historical development and later decadence. The historical drama that spanned over 150 years serves as the foundation for the personal drama seen in Faulkner's books. Each novel and narrative builds upon the other to create the imagined Yoknapatawpha County and its people as a whole. Their central theme revolves around the decline of the traditional South, symbolised by the families of Sartoris and Compson, and the advent of the brash and merciless Snopeses. The Sound and the Fury (1929), which depicts the collapse of the Compson family as seen through the brains of multiple characters, is a particularly good example of the fusion of theme and technique—the distortion of time through the use of the

inner monologue. The novel Sanctuary (1931) is about the degradation of Temple Drake, a young girl from a distinguished southern family. Its sequel, Requiem For A Nun (1951), written partially as a drama, focuses on the legal prosecution of a Negro lady who had formerly been a party to Temple Drake's debauchery. Prejudice is shown to be most harmful when it is internalised in Light in August (1932), as in the case of Joe Christmas, who maintains—despite the lack of evidence—that one of his parents was Black. The issue of racial discrimination is brought up again in Absalom, Absalom! (1936), in which a young man is abandoned by his father and sibling because of his mixed heritage. Faulkner's most emphatic moral appraisal of the connection and the problems between Negroes and whites is to be found in Intruder In the Dust (1948).

In 1940, Faulkner released the first volume of the Snopes trilogy, The Hamlet, to be followed by two volumes, The Town (1957) and The Mansion (1959), all of them charting the ascent of the evil Snopes family to positions of power and money in the community. The reivers, his last – and most amusing – work, with great many similarities to Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, debuted in 1962, the year of Faulkner's death. William Faulkner died on July 6, 1962.

Summary

After her parents pass away, Lena Grove moves in with her brother. She becomes pregnant while there through a man named Lucas Burch, who leaves her but not before promising to send for Lena when he locates a community where they may make their permanent home. After a prolonged period without hearing from Lucas, a pregnant Lena ventures out of Alabama into Mississippi in search of him. After learning that Lucas might be in Jefferson along the road, she moves in that direction. Joanna Burden's ancient plantation home is on fire the day she comes in Jefferson. Later on, we find out that Joe Christmas, who was living in a former slave cabin on the estate and having sex with Joanna, is suspected of killing her. The Jefferson town residents don't seem to be as upset over Joanna's death as they are about Joe's mixed-race heritage and his killing of a white woman.

Three years prior, in the Jefferson planing mill, there is a flashback featuring Byron Bunch, who will go on to become a central figure in the book as well as its major narrator. Soon later, a man named Joe Brown is hired, then a man named Joe Christmas arrives up seeking for work and gets hired. While working together, Christmas and Brown develop a bond that the other employees aren't sure about. Brown discloses that Christmas was formerly

the owner of a whisky distillery, however it's unclear if she still does. However, there is talk that Brown delivers the whisky to anyone would buy it, and that Christmas still occurs. Brown leaves the planing mill shortly after Christmas does. We find out that Christmas and maybe Brown reside in a former slave quarter on the property of an abandoned plantation that belongs to Miss Joanna Burden. During Reconstruction, Burden's family relocated to Jefferson from the north; he is said to still be a Yankee, which in Jefferson refers to making friends with black people.

Lena Grove arrives at the planing mill where Byron Bunch is working alone in search of Lucas Burch. During their talk, Byron reveals to Lena that Joe Brown is actually Lucas Burch's identity. Byron has developed feelings for Lena, which has disappointed him.

The narrative describes how Reverend Gail Hightower and his spouse first arrived in Jefferson many years ago. Hightower had been appointed as the preacher of a Presbyterian church in Jefferson. Hightower's wife frequently travels to Memphis to visit her family, but one day a Jeffersonian woman shopping in Memphis happens to spot Mrs. Hightower, and Jefferson quickly starts speculating as to why Mrs. Hightower goes to Memphis on a regular basis. She is eventually placed in an institution and, upon her release, goes back to Jefferson to live with her husband. She finally passes away after falling through a hotel window while staying with a man she had registered as her husband and wife, but she soon resumes her frequent trips to Memphis. Jefferson turns against Reverend Hightower as a result of the sensationalised story that his wife was at a Memphis hotel with another man; ultimately, Hightower is compelled to quit from his position within the church. He rejects the town's attempts to have him quit Jefferson completely. The commotion gradually subsides, but Jeffersonians will always view Hightower as cursed.

When Byron Bunch comes to Hightower, he tells the story of how the Burden house caught fire. Miss Burden was stabbed in the neck, and it seems that the fire was started to hide the murder. When the sheriff questions Brown, he says that Christmas and Miss Burden have been having affairs. What shocks the sheriff even more is Brown's claim that Christmas is partially black. How genuine Brown is in his account of Christmas, Miss Burden, and the fire isn't really evident.

Later in the novel, we see Joe Christmas returning even farther in time to when he was five years old and living in an orphanage. It was then that Joe accidentally witnessed the dietician and another staff member having sex. The dietician fears that Joe will reveal that he

saw her and the man together, so Joe believes he's in danger for taking a mouthful of toothpaste in her office. Instead of letting Joe stay at the orphanage for white children, the nutritionist schemes to have him transferred to an orphanage for black children. Joe is eventually adopted and brought home by a man by the name of McEachern, who is ignorant of Joe's ancestry.

Joe ultimately matures into a teenager as time goes by. When he is seventeen, he starts to sneak out of the McEachern residence and meets a local waitress named Bobbie. They are in a sexual connection. Compared to Bobbie, Joe is naiver and takes their relationship more seriously. As McEachern starts to think that Joe is leaving the house covertly, he witnesses Joe entering the stable one evening, where he maintains a suit for when he meets Bobbie. Joe gets picked up by a car, and McEachern rides along on his horse. At a dance, McEachern spots Joe and Bobbie and starts yelling at Bobbie. Joe throws a chair at McEachern. After Bobbie leaves the dance, Joe dashes home to retrieve the money Mrs. McEachern has been keeping hidden from her husband—but not from him. Joe visits Bobbie's residence with the intention of eloping with her and becoming married. However, Bobbie's roommates, the couple who own the restaurant, and an unidentified man are getting ready to leave town with Bobbie; they are all afraid that Joe killed McEachern and that the police would soon be at their house. Joe doesn't really know what's going on. The stranger hits Joe until he is on the verge of unconsciousness.

After losing Bobbie, Joe flees the scene. He roams around for fifteen years, going through Chicago, Detroit, Mexico, and finally Mississippi. He enters the Burden residence by chance and takes food. Miss Burden finds Joe, but she doesn't appear to be bothered that he broke into her kitchen. In actuality, Joe is given permission by Miss Burden to dwell in a former slave cabin on her land. He sneaks into the Burden residence one evening, enters her bedroom, and engages in sexual activity with her. But after that, tormented by his own feelings, Joe stays away from her until one day he discovers her in his cabin, when she shares with him the history of her family.

The relationship between Joe and Joanna goes through several stages. Joanna claims to be pregnant at one point, even though she is not. Joanna tries to get Joe to enrol in a black school and pursue a legal career when their relationship comes to an end, but he refuses to do so, in part because doing so would require him to come to terms with the fact that he is mostly black. Joanna tries to encourage Joe to pray with her at the last stage of their

relationship, but Joe declines. Soon after Joanna makes the suggestion that maybe she and Joe could commit suicide, Joe murders Joanna.

The sheriff searches for Joe but can't find him. In a conversation with Hightower, Byron Bunch discloses that he has moved Lena into the cottage that Lucas Burch and Joe Christmas occupied on the Burden plantation. Joe eventually hitsches a ride to Mottstown, which is not too far from Jefferson, after persistently eluding the Jefferson sheriff.

Joe is apprehended in Mottstown without resisting. Uncle Doc Hines hears the townspeople calling Joe's name as he is downtown during Joe's capture. He charges the group containing Joe and yells that Joe needs to be put to death right now. Joe Christmas is the Hines' grandson, born to their daughter Milly. Later, Mrs. Hines questions her husband about what he did with Milly's baby, or Joe Christmas. Joe is taken into prison by the Jefferson County sheriff upon his arrival in Mottstown. Uncle Doc purchases two train tickets for Jefferson with Mrs. Hines.

Once they return to Jefferson, Byron takes Doc and Mrs. Hines to the home of Hightower, where each of them gives a separate account of Joe's past: Milly, the Hines' daughter, became pregnant after having intercourse with a black man from a travelling circus. After Hines killed the man, Milly passed after giving birth to Joe. Without telling Mrs. Hines, Hines took Joe and left him at the door of an orphanage. Hines observed Joe's growth over the course of the following five years; Mrs. Hines was unaware of Joe's existence. After the Hines have completed detailing Joe's past, Byron asks Hightower if he would tell a falsehood and claim that Joe was with him when Joanna Burden was slain, giving Joe a plausible denouement. Hightower firmly declines.

Because Lena is going to give birth, Byron convinces Hightower to visit the cottage where she is residing. Mrs. Hines and Doc are also present. After assisting Lena in giving birth to a boy, Hightower leaves for home. When he returns to the cabin later, Lena and her son are by themselves. Lena reveals that she declined Byron's proposal of marriage. Hightower finds out that Byron is at the courts downtown, having abandoned his job at the planing mill.

Bryon persuades the sheriff to let Lucas Burch show him Lena and the infant at the cabin. Lucas is taken aback at seeing Lena and the child. He starts his usual sly repartee about wanting to look after Lena and their child, but he needs money and has people working against him. Once more, he leaves Lena behind, sneaking via the cabin's back window to

avoid being noticed by the constable who is waiting outside. Byron pursues Lucas after spotting him leave the cabin and ultimately catches up with him near the train tracks that lead outside of Jefferson. As Byron expected, he loses the struggle against Lucas and is defeated. As Lucas leaps onto a train and vanishes, Byron observes. A man in a passing waggon informs Byron that Joe has died as he is making his way back to the cabin.

We find out that Joe fled when the constable was escorting him around the town square. Joe was followed by a young man called Percy Grimm, who had gathered men to protect the jail, courthouse, and square. Percy Grimm eventually witnessed Joe running into Hightower's home. Mrs. Hines, Joe's grandmother, had visited him in jail earlier and had told him about Hightower. Grimm repeatedly shoots Joe after Hightower claims that he was with him the night Joanna Burden was killed, and he then castrates Joe using a butcher knife. Joe passes away.

By the book's end, Lena is again on the road, but this time she's travelling with Byron Bunch and her infant. Bunch wants to wed Lena, but she enjoys travelling and seems to be preoccupied with locating Lucas Burch.

Critical Analysis

ISOLATION

Divorce A recurring theme in a large number of Faulkner's novels is the division of people. Lightin August's meticulous, real restriction of the subject gives this dual theme—the seclusion and the forcing of life into a predetermined design—extra poignancy.

Essential characters found throughout the network. August is full of secluded individuals, or recluses, who choose to live on the periphery of society or are forced to do so. By his blind process of detachment, Byron isolates himself from the outside world. Lena is a soon-to-be mother who has given herself up and finds that she can live alone because she is in the right place, thanks to Joe Brown's assistance. She is the catalyst for Byron's final and delayed foray into the world of human interaction and cooperation.

They are the only characters who have the ability to resolve the mystery surrounding their own offence and sadness, despite the fact that their questionable and unconventional family is still being framed in the novel's last section.

COHERENT SENSE OF IDENTITY

The novel's frank exploration of racial and sexual concerns, as well as the ways in which history, nature, society, and personal experiences influence character, make these particular topical flows significant to Faulkner's work.

The Residents of Jefferson have come to accept an implicit recognition of Reverend Hightower, Joanna Burden, and Joe Christmas; however, each of these individuals deliberately resists or yields to the deforming influence of an unyielding social and moral demand. Faulkner's "aggregate voice of the network" exemplifies how society attempts to impose narrow-minded, restrictive notions of personality based on general classes, such sex and race.

While some people struggle with the weight of what are often intrusive attempts to limit and organise, others do not require these external cues to give oneself a sense of clarity, request, and definition. For Joe Christmas, accepting subpar metrics is inevitable when there is no consistent and observable capacity for self-awareness. His travels eventually turn into a symbolic voyage to explore his identity, a search for fulfilment and introspection, but they are ultimately a perilous and elusive one.

RACISM

One of Light in August's main themes is the concern over racial character. The moment someone senses that Joe Christmas may have some black ancestry, they begin to treat him very differently from how they treat white people. A significant portion of the characters in Light in August seem to have been influenced negatively by their race. Joanna Burden, Doc Hines, Joe Christmas. Even still, a sizable portion of the characters who are not insane believe that violently abusing Black people is sufficient. Watt Kennedy, the Jefferson sheriff, gives off the impression of being a decent man, but during a cross-examination that was ultimately meaningless, he whips a randomly selected dark.

RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

"Light in August" by William Faulkner contains multiple allusions to Christianity. Throughout all of his characters, he makes extensive use of rigid imagery. Even though Faulkner claims he didn't do it on purpose, these equals seem rather calculated. The Christ narrative is arguably one of the most well-known stories ever created, and it seems likely that someone will someday write something similar. According to William Faulkner, he didn't

intentionally insert the Christian equals. Several commentators argue that this book lacks strict imagery and that other commentators are reading too much into it.

After reading Faulkner's epic, it's difficult to avoid drawing some parallels to Christianity. The composition of "Light in August" is the most blatant example of his ties to the Catholic foundation and knowledge.

The Awakening – Kate Chopin

About the Author

The parents of Kate Chopin, Eliza and Thomas O'Flaherty, gave birth to Kate O'Flaherty in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1850. She was the third of five children; her brothers, from her father's first marriage, were in their early twenties, and her sisters passed away when they were still in infancy. She was the only child who survived to be twenty-five years old.

She was sent to The Sacred Heart Academy, a Catholic boarding school in St. Louis, when she was five and a half years old in 1855. Two months later, her father was killed when the train he was riding on crossed a collapsing bridge. She spent the following two years living at home with her widowed mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Victoria Verdon Charleville, her great-grandmother, was in charge of her schooling and gave her lessons in music, French, and historical gossip about women in St. Louis. Growing up, Kate O'Flaherty was surrounded by intelligent, self-reliant, unmarried women. In addition, they were astute and descended from a long history of trailblazing women. Her mother raised her five children and operated a shipping company on the Mississippi, becoming the first woman in St. Louis to legally separate from her husband. Although full of brothers, uncles, cousins, and borders, Kate's family was empty of married couples until she was sixteen.

She was top of her class when she went back to the Sacred Heart Academy, where the nuns were renowned for their intellect. She gave the graduating speech, received honours, and was accepted into the prestigious Children of Mary Society. She was a well-liked, although cynical, debutante after graduating. "Just keep asking 'What do you think?'" is the best flirting advise she ever penned in her diary. (Toth, 62).

She lost contact with Kitty Garesche, the one friend she had made at Sacred Heart Academy, as a result of growing up during the Civil War. Her family-owned slaves and gave the South support. The Gareshe family was compelled to relocate since St. Louis was a pro-North city. When Kitty came back from the war, she and Chopin remained friends until Kitty

became a nun and joined Sacred Heart. There is no other proof that Chopin was friends with any other close female companions.

Three days before Christmas in 1863, the year Kitty was exiled, Kate's grandmother passed away. On Mardi Gras Day, Kate's half-brother George lost his life to typhoid disease. Chopin had a profound scepticism towards religion as a result of these unfortunate events, which included her father's death on All Saints Day eight years earlier.

She married twenty-five-year-old Oscar Chopin in 1870, the daughter of a prosperous Louisiana cotton plantation family. Like Kate, he had a background as a French Catholic. According to all accounts, he "allowed" his wife's unprecedented freedom and cherished her independence and brilliance. Following their union, she gave birth to five sons and two daughters before the age of twenty-eight when they were residing in New Orleans. Due to Oscar's lack of skill in business, they were compelled to relocate to his former residence in a little Louisiana parish. There, in 1882, Oscar succumbed to swamp fever, and Kate assumed management of his property and general store for more than a year.

She sold everything in 1884 and went back to live with her mother in St. Louis. Kate found herself reunited with her kids after Eliza's tragic death the following year. She started writing to help her and her little family. She penned short stories on folks she had known in Louisiana after finding popularity right away. A true story of a notorious New Orleans woman from the French Quarter served as the inspiration for The Awakening.

Following the publication of her debut book, At Fault, in 1890, two compilations of her short stories—Bayou Folk in 1894 and A Night in Acadia in 1897—were released. By the time The Awakening was released in 1899, she was well-known in the community as a woman writer and colorist, having contributed more than a hundred stories, essays, and sketches to literary journals.

As a writer, Kate Chopin produced work quickly and with little editing. Usually, she worked in her house with her kids close by. The Awakening's theme and content created a stir, and Chopin's publishing led to his exclusion from the St. Louis Fine Art Club. She wrote very few short stories in the final five years of her life, and very few of those were published, because she was so devastated by the response to the book. She suffered the consequences of breaking social norms, just like Edna did, and as Lazar Ziff puts it, "learned that her society would not tolerate her questionings." Her torturous quiet at the turn of the century was a loss to American writers following the premature passing of Norris and Crane. Although she was

living at the start of the twentieth century, society's fear of an uncertain dawn had rendered her speechless (Ziff, 305).

As you read The Awakening, keep in mind that it is a kunstleroman, "a tale of a young woman who struggles to realise herself - and her artistic ability" (Huf, 69). You should also keep in mind that Edna and Chopin were both seeking recognition for their work. Her sudden and frustrating death on August 22, 1904, from a brain haemorrhage, marked the end of that search.

Summary

Edna Pontellier, the main character of Kate Chopin's The Awakening, defies societal conventions by divorcing her husband Leónce and engaging in an extramarital affair as she comes to understand herself as an independent human being. Grand Isle is an island off the coast of Louisiana where the first half of the book is set. Upper-class Creole families from New Orleans live there during the summer as a way to get away from the heat and unwind by the sea. The men go back to the city to work during the week, while the women and kids remain on the island.

Edna Pontellier meets Robert Lebrun, a young gallant whose mother lets out the island's cottages, during the summer. Edna loves his company and they spend virtually all of their time together, especially because her husband is always busy with work. Edna starts to feel different because of Robert's continuous presence; she starts to see herself as a complete person with distinct needs, interests, and aspirations. She starts to speak up to her husband after realising she is not happy to be just a wife and mother.

Edna's self-realization moments are intimately connected to the sea. She was discouraged with her previous attempts at swimming, but all of a sudden, at her big moment of waking, she acquires the skill. She also spends a lot of time at and near the ocean with Robert. Edna experiences a figurative rebirth when she nods off for hours on an island during a day excursion they go together on a whim.

Robert abruptly leaves the island and travels to Vera Cruz in search of business opportunities after realising that he and Edna are growing too close. Robert leaves Edna with no more than a few hours' notice, which upsets her, and she later experiences depression. During that summer, Edna also makes friends with Mademoiselle Reisz, an eccentric, single

old woman who can make Edna cry with her piano playing, and the pregnant Madame Ratignolle, the embodiment of maternity.

When the Pontelliers get back to the city, Leónce spends his time earning money and buying ostentatious items for their Esplanade Street residence. Edna initially gets used to her regular schedule, taking calls on Tuesday afternoons and going to plays and concerts with her husband on other evenings. But soon, much to her husband's chagrin, she stops answering calls. She starts painting, and her husband notices that she is acting differently from usual. Leónce, feeling a little lost, visits an elderly family friend named Doctor Mandelet for guidance. The doctor tells him to leave his wife alone, but he keeps quiet about his suspicions that Edna is seeing someone else.

Edna is merely choosing to follow her own desires, irrespective of the opinions of her spouse or the community. She keeps thinking about Robert, and while she is joyful some days, she is unhappy on other days. After learning that Robert has been sending letters to Mademoiselle Reisz about her, Edna begins to pay her frequent visits so she can read the letters and hear her friend play the piano.

The Colonel, Edna's father, pays the Pontelliers a brief visit. Edna doesn't have a close relationship with her father, but she finds him amusing and gives him her whole attention when he is around. But when Edna declines to travel to her sister's wedding in Kentucky, they part ways amicably. Following the Colonel's exit, Edna is left alone by Leónce and the kids. The kids visit their grandma in the country while Leónce continues his business in New York.

Edna relishes her newfound independence. She sees her pals, has quiet, private dinners, and paints a great deal. Along with placing horse bets at racetracks, she also starts hanging out with Alcée Arobin, a charming young guy with a reputation for being a philanderer. She gambles and wins a lot of money, and her connection with Arobin begins to veer towards the sexual.

One day, while Edna is spending time with Mademoiselle Reisz, she makes the decision to vacate the Pontellier residence on Esplanade Street. She plans to relocate to a smaller "pigeon house" down the corner because she has enough money to support herself from her painting sales and gaming winnings. She desires independence and disclaims whatever claim her husband may have over her. She confesses her feelings for Robert for the first time on the day she finds out he's going back to New Orleans.

Edna experiences a range of feelings when she sleeps with Arobin later that day, but she doesn't feel ashamed. She is having a modest dinner party in a few days to commemorate both her birthday and her move out of the house. Every attendee has a great time at this lavish and delightful celebration. Edna is happy in her new home since it allows her to be free of the typical societal restraints. She carries on having an affair with Arobin, but she doesn't grow close to him.

When she meets Robert at Mademoiselle Reisz's flat one day, their encounter is tense and uncomfortable. To Edna's dismay, Robert maintains his distance, and she experiences mixed emotions following—not sure if he is in love with her or not. A few days later, she meets him at a suburban garden, and he brings her back home. He sits with his eyes closed, and when Edna gives him a kiss, he gives her a passionate kiss back. They declare their love for one another, and Robert says he wants to wed her. All of a sudden, a note announcing Madame Ratignolle's labour arrives. Robert agrees to wait for Edna's return, so Edna leaves after making a vow to go see her.

Edna feels that staying with Madame Ratignolle is torment, but she does it masochistically since she knows how much pain she is in. Madame Ratignolle cautions Edna before she departs, telling her to always keep her kids in mind. Despite being a little down in response to her friend's remarks, Edna is eager to see Robert again. Sadly, she discovers that Robert has vanished forever.

As the book comes to a close, Edna is back on Grand Isle. She heads to the beach, makes her decision in advance, and stands there in the sun, nude. She starts swimming out into the ocean without giving it any thought. She swims till she is tired, thinking proudly about how she has evaded her children and their claim on her. She slowly drowns, memories of her early years flashing before her eyes.

Critical Analysis

The narrative of The Awakening tells the tale of Edna Pontellier's slow self-discovery as a free agent with goals and aspirations, and her battle to fulfil those goals in a society that does not respect her.

Edna first understands that her husband does not view her as a person, but rather as a possession that he is in charge of. Edna begins to doubt her marriage after noticing a clear difference in the way Léonce and Robert treat her in the first few chapters. Léonce expects

Edna to give him her whole attention when he gets home late, but he only pays attention to Edna and the kids when it suits him. He prefers the company of the men at his gentlemen's club. Edna gets to experience what it's like to have someone listen to her throughout their wonderful chats that Robert and Edna are having in the meantime. The more Robert treats Léonce like an autonomous person, the more oppressive her actions feel. Edna's rising sense of autonomy and independence—which is closely related to how Robert has helped her feel like a person—is symbolised by her accomplishment of learning how to swim for the first time as a result of her newfound awareness. Unfortunately, Edna is forced to pursue her sense of freedom from her time with Robert once he departs for Mexico.

Edna has grown in love with Robert and misses him, but her early experiments with experimenting with her own independence in New Orleans are not particularly romantic. Edna reverts to painting as a means of self-expression and abandons her duty as a housewife in favour of hanging around with outcasts such as Mademoiselle Reisz and Alcée Arobin. Edna experiences a second awakening as a result of Alcée teaching her the distinction between desire and love. Edna realises she is aroused when they kiss for the first time, but she also realises that feelings have nothing to do with love. Léonce manages their family, so Edna feels obligated to live up to societal standards. Frustrated, Edna moves into the pigeon house, a place she can control. Unfortunately, this is when her experiments with freedom start to go wrong. In the eyes of society, Edna's declaration of autonomy has been virtually erased by Léonce's letters claiming she moved for a renovation. When Edna asks, Alcée doesn't leave; instead, she pushes her bounds. The worst part is that, despite his homecoming, Robert doesn't seem to think Edna can genuinely leave her husband and begin a new life with him. Edna discovers Robert has abandoned her when she gets back from seeing Adèle in her hospital bed. He feels it is a loving gesture to spare Edna the embarrassment of divorcing her husband for another man. In this way, rather than taking Edna at her word, Robert decides what he thinks is best for her. Edna is disappointed that she and Robert are unable to create the life they have imagined, and her disappointment intensifies when she recalls Adèle's warning to keep her kids in mind. Edna comes to the realisation that, despite being aware of her personal aspirations, her society duty has imprisoned her. She is bound to this role by her children, who require her to take care of them and submit to Léonce. Robert and Alcée, the two men who sparked her passion, try to make choices for her. With this spirit, Edna goes back to Grand Isle, the place she first learned to swim alone in the sea and find her

independence. Whether she commits suicide to join the freedom of the sea in a sort of ascension and triumph or drowns in the stream of society in defeat is still unclear.

Unit – V Short Story

The Cask of Amontillado – Edgar Allan Poe

About the author

Boston was the place of Edgar Allan Poe's birth on January 19, 1809. Poe was reared as a foster child in Richmond, Virginia, by John and Frances Allan after his professional acting parents passed away when he was three years old. Poe was sent to the best boarding schools by his wealthy tobacco exporter father, John Allan, and eventually to the University of Virginia, where he excelled academically. But when Allan refused to pay Poe's gambling debts, he was forced to quit the university after less than a year of study.

Poe made a quick trip back to Richmond, but things didn't work out between him and Allan. Poe relocated to Boston in 1827 and enlisted in the US Army. In that same year, George Redway published Tamerlane and Other Poems, his debut collection of poems. His second collection, Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems (Hatch & Dunning), was released in 1829. Not much attention from the public or critics was paid to either book. Poe was accepted to the USMA after serving in the Army, but he was once more forced to withdraw due to a lack of funding. After that, he relocated to Baltimore to live with his aunt Maria Clemm and her daughter, Virginia.

Around this time, Poe started selling short stories to journals. In 1835, he travelled to Richmond, Virginia, with his aunt and cousin Virginia, to take a position as editor of the Southern Literary Messenger. He wed Virginia in 1836 when she was thirteen years old. Poe would edit other literary journals over the course of the following ten years, including the Broadway Journal in New York City, Graham's Magazine and Burton's Gentleman's Magazine in Philadelphia. He made his reputation as an editor, poet, and writer of short stories during this time. Some of his most well-known poems and stories, such as "The Raven," "The Murders in the Rue Mortuary," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and "The Fall of the House of Usher," were published by him. Following Virginia's TB death in 1847, Poe's lengthy battle with despair and drunkenness become more severe. In 1849, he made a quick trip back to Richmond before moving on to Philadelphia in search of work as an editor. He

made an unidentified stop in Baltimore. He was found in a semi-conscious state on October 3, 1849. Four days later, Poe passed away from "acute congestion of the brain." Medical professionals who revisited the case have provided evidence suggesting that Poe might have had rabies.

Poe's contributions to American and international literature as an editor, poet, and critic were significant. His works establish him as one of the pioneers of detective and horror fiction. He is recognised as the "architect" of the modern short tale in numerous anthologies. Being among the first critics to concentrate solely on the impact of style and structure in a literary work, he has been regarded as a precursor to the movement known as "art for art's sake." Stéphane Mallarmé and Arthur Rimbaud, two French symbolists, cited him as a literary forerunner. Poe's French translation took Charles Baudelaire close to fourteen years to complete. Poe is regarded as one of the first American authors to achieve international recognition in literature today.

Summary

The story's narrator, Montresor, declares at the beginning that he wants retribution because his friend Fortunato has offended him irreparably. But he intends to take his retribution gradually and without jeopardising himself. He makes the decision to turn Fortunato's love of wine against him. During the funfair season, Montresor approaches Fortunato while donning a black silk mask. He informs Fortunato that he has found a light Spanish sherry that could be mistaken for Amontillado. Fortunato, which means "fortunate" in Italian, is dressed in the multicoloured jester's outfit, which includes a cone crown adorned with bells. Fortunato is informed by Montresor that he will ask a man by the name of Luchesi to taste it if he is too busy. Fortunato asserts that Luchesi is a rival and that he is unable of differentiating between Amontillado and other varieties of sherry. In order to prove to Montresor that the wine is authentic Amontillado, Fortunato is eager to sample it. They had to visit Montresor's vaults, per Fortunato's insistence.

By sending his minions to the funfair, Montresor has cleverly arranged this meeting. The two guys go down into the moist vaults that are filled with a white mineral called nitre, also known as saltpetre. Fortunato coughs, as if the nitre had irritated him. Every time the narrator tries to bring Fortunato home, Fortunato says no. Rather, he concedes that wine is the cure for his cough. The men keep exploring the subterranean vaults that contain the Montresor family's dead bodies. Fortunato says he forgot the family motto and coat of arms

of Montresor in answer to the crypts. In response, Montresor states that the image on his family shield is "a huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel." "Nemo me impune lacessit," which translates to "no one attacks me with impunity," is the Latin motto.

Later on in their voyage, Fortunato performs a hand gesture that is a coded signal for the Masons, a select fraternal order. Even though Montresor professes to be a Mason, he is unable to recognise this hand gesture. Upon Fortunato's request for evidence, Montresor displays his trowel, suggesting that he is a practicing stonemason. After stating that he must be joking, Fortunato lets the two men walk on. The men enter a crypt with three of the four walls decorated with human bones. There are bones on the ground that came from the fourth wall. There's a tiny indentation on the uncovered wall where Montresor informs Fortunato that the Amontillado is being kept. Now quite drunk, Fortunato heads to the back of the break. Fortunato, who moves slowly, is abruptly chained to a stone by Montresor.

Montresor starts to fortify the entrance to this tiny crypt, locking Fortunato inside while teasing him with an invitation to flee. Montresor is building the first tier of the wall when Fortunato yells incoherently. After the alcohol wears off, Fortunato cries out in fear and helplessness. Yet as the layers pile up, Fortunato becomes quiet. Fortunato chuckles just as Montresor is about to finish, as if Montresor is making fun of him, but Montresor is not kidding. Finally, following a last scream, "For God's love, Montresor!" After Fortunato ceases responding, Montresor yells the name of his opponent twice. When he receives no answer, Montresor says the dampness of the tunnels makes his heart feel sick. With only the sound of Fortunato's bells jingling to accompany him, he places the final stone and plasters the wall shut. At last, he moves the bones to the fourth wall. He writes that they have been alone for fifty years. "May he rest in peace," is the Latin phrase he uses to end.

Critical Analysis

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By sending his minions to the funfair, Montresor has cleverly arranged this meeting. The two guys go down into the moist vaults that are filled with a white mineral called nitre, also known as saltpetre. Fortunato coughs, as if the nitre had irritated him. Every time the narrator tries to bring Fortunato home, Fortunato says no. Rather, he concedes that wine is the cure for his cough. The men keep exploring the subterranean vaults that contain the Montresor family's dead bodies. Fortunato says he forgot the family motto and coat of arms of Montresor in answer to the crypts. In response, Montresor states that the image on his family shield is "a huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel." "Nemo me impune lacessit," which translates to "no one attacks me with impunity," is the Latin motto.

Later on in their voyage, Fortunato performs a hand gesture that is a coded signal for the Masons, a select fraternal order. Even though Montresor professes to be a Mason, he is unable to recognise this hand gesture. Upon Fortunato's request for evidence, Montresor displays his trowel, suggesting that he is a practicing stonemason. After stating that he must be joking, Fortunato lets the two men walk on. The men enter a crypt with three of the four walls decorated with human bones. There are bones on the ground that came from the fourth wall. There's a tiny indentation on the uncovered wall where Montresor informs Fortunato that the Amontillado is being kept. Now quite drunk, Fortunato heads to the back of the break. Fortunato, who moves slowly, is abruptly chained to a stone by Montresor.

Montresor starts to fortify the entrance to this tiny crypt, locking Fortunato inside while teasing him with an invitation to flee. Montresor is building the first tier of the wall when Fortunato yells incoherently. After the alcohol wears off, Fortunato cries out in fear and helplessness. Yet as the layers pile up, Fortunato becomes quiet. Fortunato chuckles just as Montresor is about to finish, as if Montresor is making fun of him, but Montresor is not kidding. Finally, following a last scream, "For God's love, Montresor!" After Fortunato ceases responding, Montresor yells the name of his opponent twice. When he receives no answer, Montresor says the dampness of the tunnels makes his heart feel sick. With only the

sound of Fortunato's bells jingling to accompany him, he places the final stone and plasters the wall shut. At last, he moves the bones to the fourth wall. He writes that they have been alone for fifty years. "May he rest in peace," is the Latin phrase he uses to end.

Bartleby, the Scrivener – Herman Melville

About the author

August 1, 1819, saw the birth of Herman Melville in New York City; he was reared in upstate New York. In an effort to provide for his family following the death of his merchant father Allan, who left them in poverty, Melville worked a variety of occupations, including banking and teaching. Melville's writing career began in 1845, when he had adventures as a seaman. He was taken prisoner and detained for several months during one voyage. Friends urged Melville to write about his experience after his return. His first book, Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life (Wiley and Putnam, 1846), was a literary success. His second book, Omoo (Harper & Brothers, 1847), continued his travels.

Following his retirement from marine duty, Melville became an avid reader. He relocated to the Berkshires after marrying Elizabeth Shaw in 1847, after which he first settled in New York. Nathaniel Hawthorne, a writer, lived nearby by and became a confidant and close friend. Melville wrote Redburn: His First Voyage (Harper & Brothers, 1849), a farce, and Mardi and a Voyage Thither, a philosophical allegory. Even if the latter proved to be profitable, Melville quickly went back to the symbolic in White-Jacket; or, the World in a Man-of-War, his next book (Harper & Brothers, 1850). His masterpiece, Moby-Dick, or the Whale (Harper & Brothers), was finished in 1851. Though Melville's contemporaries rejected the book, which is now regarded by modern academics as one of the great American novels, he didn't gain anything from the endeavour. Pierre; or the Ambiguities (Harper & Brothers, 1852) and The Confidence Man (Dix, Edwards & Co., 1857), the other two novels that today comprise the heart of the Melville canon, met a similar end.

Melville wrote magazine tales and went farming in the 1850s to support his family. In 1856, during a trip to Europe, he had his final encounter with his friend Hawthorne. Melville realised during the occasion that his career as a novelist was over. He quit writing fiction in 1857 after returning to New York while continuing to be unknown to the literary world. He started writing poetry and worked for twenty years as a customs officer.

Melville was profoundly affected by the Civil War, which eventually became the main theme of his poetry. Melville found himself deeply entwined with the war since so many of his family members were involved in different facets of it. When he visited Washington, D.C. in 1861, he saw the Senate discussing secession. In 1864, he travelled to the front with his brother. Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War: Civil War Poems (Harper & Brothers, 1866) was Melville's first book of poems to be published. Many critics consider the collection to be as rich and ambitious as any of his novels. To little recognition, he went on to produce and publish three further books of poetry, the most notable of which being Clarel: A Poem and a Pilgrimage (G. P. Putnam & Co., 1876).

At the age of 72, Melville passed away from a heart attack on September 28, 1891. "There has died and been buried in this city [...] a man who is so little known, even by name, to the generation now in the vigour of life that only one newspaper contained an obituary account of him, and this was but of three or four lines," the New York Times reported during the week of his death. The literary world didn't start to acknowledge Melville as one of America's best writers until the 1920s.

Summary

The account of the oddest man the narrator has ever met is told by the elderly lawyer who makes a good living assisting wealthy clients with bonds, mortgages, and title deeds. The narrator has added Bartleby to his team. Nippers and Turkey are the two scriveners that the narrator currently employs. Turkey is inebriated and Nippers has indigestion, yet the office manages to function since in the mornings Turkey is sober and in the afternoons Nippers has calmed down despite Turkey's inebriation. The office boy, Ginger Nut, gets his nickname from the small cakes he brings to the men. After Bartleby responds to the advertisement, the narrator hires the young man who seems hopeless in the hopes that his composure will calm the other scriveners down.

When asked to assist in proofreading one of the documents he copied one day, Bartleby replies with a simple "I would prefer not to." This is the first of several rejections. Bartleby participates in fewer and fewer office tasks, much to the narrator's dismay and the annoyance of the other workers. Despite the narrator's best efforts to reason with Bartleby and get insight into his character, Bartleby consistently says, "I would prefer not to," in response to requests for information about himself or to complete tasks. When the narrator visits the office over the weekend, he finds that Bartleby resides there. The narrator is struck

by how lonely Bartleby's life is: Wall Street is as empty as a ghost town at night and on Sundays. He fluctuates between disgust and sympathy for Bartleby's odd actions.

Bartleby keeps turning down assignments until, in last, he is working for no pay at all. And yet, the narrator is unable to persuade him to go. The narrator believes he is powerless to stop the scrivener from using his unusual influence over his boss. The narrator is forced to act when his business associates start to question Bartleby's presence at the workplace because he doesn't work. Otherwise, his reputation could be shattered. His attempts to persuade Bartleby to go are ineffective. The narrator relocates his offices as a result. However, not long after, Bartleby refuses to leave, so the new occupants of the narrator's former offices approach him and beg for assistance. Following his removal from the offices, Bartleby becomes a ghost in the hallways. In an attempt to reason with Bartleby one more time, the narrator visits him, but Bartleby rejects him. The narrator skips work for a few days out of concern that the anti-Bartleby people may harass him. Upon his return, he finds out that Bartleby has been imprisoned.

Bartleby appears considerably more depressed than normal at the prison. The narrator's goodwill is turned down. To ensure that Bartleby has plenty to eat, the narrator buys off a turnkey. But Bartleby has passed away by the time the narrator arrives, several days later. He would rather not eat.

The narrator learns later on that Bartleby was employed by a Dead Letter Office. The narrator muses that someone with Bartleby's disposition would have fallen into an even deeper depression if they had received the dead letters. The letters stand as symbols for both our own death and the fallibility of our good intentions. The narrator has seen a view of the world via Bartleby, as the poor scrivener must have perceived it. The story ends with the narrator's sorrowful and resigned sigh, "Ah, Bartleby! Oh, everybody!"

Critical Analysis

A well-known example of a fictional work in which the narrator divulges more information about himself than about the subject of the story is Melville's tale. Although Bartleby is portrayed as the story's protagonist, the true focus of "Bartleby, the Scrivener" may actually be the elderly narrator, whose initial indifference to Bartleby's stiff non-compliance eventually gives way to sympathy and compassion for another person.

Undoubtedly, Bartleby discloses very little about himself to us. He functions as an opaque surface that is more akin to a brick wall than a mirror, reflecting both the wall he faces at work and the prison wall he is staring at when he dies. It's important to remember that "Bartleby, the Scrivener" proudly has the subtitle "A Story of Wall Street."

Bartleby's employer is uneasy because he consistently refuses to perform his duties in a passive-aggressive manner rather than an aggressive one. We just cannot tell, but he might be as unhappy as Nippers seems to be (but without any of his nervous energy). For the narrator and us, therefore, he is a mystery.

The concept of conformity can be seen in "Bartleby, the Scrivener" with similar passivity. Wall Street, the financial hub of the United States, serves as the story's backdrop for good reason: Melville seems to be implying that the worlds of commerce, law, and finance imprison and constrain the individual, turning everyone into mindless gears in the machinery of industry.

Even the title of the narrative, "scrivener," refers to a vocation that consists only of duplicating pre-existing materials rather than creating fresh content. The narrator finds Bartleby noteworthy because he resists the need to fit in and obey.

As a scrivener is a writer, Bartleby has been interpreted by several reviewers as an autobiographical depiction. Herman Melville "preferred not to" carry on writing the sea stories that had become immensely popular early in his career, instead deciding to explore more experimental and difficult fiction (most notably, Moby-Dick, which was released a few years prior to Melville's "Bartleby" and received a lot of negative and perplexing reviews).

The capitalist system wants Melville to become little more than a "scrivener," of sorts, by pushing him to write more formulaic works that would sell copies and bring in large sums of money for his publishers. Less volumes will be sold as a result of his steadfast refusal to give in to this demand; in "Bartleby," this results in the scrivener losing his work and starving to death (much like many less successful authors before him).

Indeed, "Bartleby" might be seen as a precursor to the writings of twentieth-century authors like Franz Kafka and Jorge Luis Borges because of its focus on the symbolic act of writing and the ways that bureaucracy can lock us into a lifeless and inactive existence.

In fact, Melville's tale foreshadows Kafka's in "the genre of fantasies of conduct and feeling," as noted by Borges. Another theory is that "Bartleby" foreshadowed existentialism because he refused to roll the Sisyphean boulder back up the hill in a non-threatening manner.

The Conversion of the Jews – Philip Roth

About the author

American novelist and short-story writer Philip Roth was born in Newark, New Jersey, on March 19, 1933, and passed away in New York City on May 22, 2018. His works are distinguished by a keen sense of dialogue, a concern for Jewish middle-class life, and the difficult entanglements of familial and sexual love. The collapse of the ageing body and mind, as well as an ever more overt obsession with mortality, shaped Roth's later works.

Roth taught at the University of Chicago after earning an M.A. there as well as other places. His breakthrough role came from the film Goodbye, Columbus (1959; released in 1969), whose title tale openly portrays the hedonistic materialism of a prosperous Jewish suburban family. A National Book Award was given to the compilation. After the publication of When She Was Good in 1967, Roth's first book, Letting Go (1962), he did not achieve the same level of success as he did until 1969 with Portnoy's Complaint (1969; film 1972), an outrageously satirical portrayal of a modern Jewish man who is obsessed with sex and at odds with his controlling mother.

Following a number of lesser-known books, such as The Breast (1972), My Life As a Man (1974), and The Professor of Desire (1977), one of Roth's most significant works, The Ghost Writer (1979), introduced readers to Nathan Zuckerman, an aspiring young writer and Roth's alter persona. The Zuckerman trilogy consists of two later books that follow the writer-protagonist's subsequent life and career: Zuckerman Unbound (1981) and The Anatomy Lesson (1983). These three pieces were reissued as the title Zuckerman Bound (1985), together with the novella The Prague Orgy (2019 film). Following up on a fourth Zuckerman book, The Counterlife (1986), Roth published Sabbath's Theatre (1995), a National Book Award-winning book about the ageing and promiscuous former puppeteer Mickey Sabbath.

Roth received a Pulitzer Prize for his subsequent work, American Pastoral (1997; film 2016). The first book in the three-volume American Trilogy series, narrated by Zuckerman, is about a middle-class couple whose daughter turns terrorist. I Married a Communist (1998)

and The Human Stain (2000; film 2003) are the later installments. In the 2001 film The Dying Animal (also released in 2008 as Elegy), an elderly professor of literature muses over a life spent emotionally alone. In The Plot Against America (2004, TV miniseries 2020), fascism in the US during World War II is depicted in a counterhistorical manner.

After winning the prize twice, for Operation Shylock (1993) and The Human Stain, Roth made history by winning the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction three times with his illness- and death-exploring novel Everyman (2006). Everyman also signalled the beginning of a run of relatively short works by Roth that were all concerned with themes of mortality. In the 2007 film Exit Ghost, Zuckerman—who had been living in self-imposed exile in the Berkshire Mountains for more than ten years—is brought back to awareness of life's possibilities. A 19-year-old man who died is the narrator of the 2008 film Indignation (2016 film). Reexamining Everyman's mortality-obsessed territory, The Humbling (2009; film 2014) does so through the eyes of an ageing actor who, having realised he has lost his skill, finds himself unable to work. The central theme of Nemesis (2010), which takes place in 1944 in Newark, New Jersey, is a polio epidemic. Roth was the 2011 Man Booker International Prize winner. He declared that he had given up writing the next year.

Summary

Ozzie Freedman has been preparing for his Bar Mitzvah confirmation by enrolling in a synagogue Hebrew school. Although he is a talented student, his teacher, Rabbi Marvin Binder, finds him to be far too curious. Binder has called Mrs. Freedman three times to criticise her son's disruptive influence on his class because he finds it irritating that Ozzie won't accept conventional doctrinal solutions to basic religious concerns.

Tensions between Ozzie and Binder during the Wednesday afternoon session before their third scheduled meeting lead to a crisis. Previously, Ozzie had rejected Binder's flimsy denial of Christian assertions that Jesus was divine. Additionally, he didn't think Binder's explanation of an aeroplane catastrophe and the reason Jews were especially upset about the number of Jews on board was satisfactory. They are now at odds over the matter of God's omnipotence.

None of the boys ask questions or offer remarks during the open discussion session. But Binder, seeing that Ozzie is thinking about something, prods him into talking. Ozzie is curious as to why God could not have orchestrated Jesus' virgin birth if He was able to do

anything at all. His claim that Binder is ignorant of the subject causes a ruckus in the classroom and an outraged response from the rabbi.

Ozzie leaps up onto the synagogue roof after Binder hits him. After the fire department is called, Ozzie finds himself staring down at an increasing number of onlookers. While Ozzie's fellow pupils applaud and encourage him to leap, Binder first insists and then begs that he come down from the roof. As she arrives for her appointment with Binder, Ozzie's mother joins him in the crowd.

Encouraged by this surprising development, Ozzie uses his influence on the gathered audience. He threatens to leap from the building unless Binder, his mother, the firefighters, the kids, and even the devout old synagogue custodian, Yakov Blotnik, kneel in front of him on the ground. Next, he insists that Binder and the others publicly declare their belief that "God can make a child without intercourse." After delivering his vow that no one would ever suffer punishment for the will of God, Ozzie finally jumps down—into the yellow net that the firefighters below, in a kneeling position, are holding up.

Critical Analysis

Upon initial observation, "The Conversion of the Jews" seems to tell a story that is more about simplicity than the existence of abstract concepts. In fact, the story is so simple that it can be summarised in just a few words: "The Conversion of the Jews" tells the tale of Oscar "Ozzie" Freedman, a teenage lad who is experiencing a spiritual crisis. The story's fundamental topic, or idea, does not initially appear to be very original or remarkable because Roth did not find the adolescent's crisis of faith. As a reader, one can genuinely identify with Ozzie's criticism of societal norms and practices that seem to stifle adolescent souls' impulses and chain them to duty and conformity. Ozzie's vivid imagination is driven by a single question: why? It is possible to wonder if Ozzie's religious crisis is a sign of a turning point in a child's life or if it is just a small argument that eventually goes away. By arguing that faith and religion are actually two distinct concepts—a premise that Ozzie attempts to prove—Roth hopes to elevate Ozzie to the status of individuals who have dared to question social mores through his writing.

Werlock (2009) notes the initial reception that Roth's work was able to receive upon its publication and notes that the praise the book received in literary circles for tackling delicate subjects in a humorous yet insightful way stood in stark contrast to the criticism the work received from the Jewish community. Nonetheless, Roth quickly responded to the

unfavourable reception the book received among Jewish communities, attempting to make clear his position and reveal the motivation behind the book's release. "...deliberately keeping Jews out of the imagination of Gentiles, for fear of the bigots and their stereotyping minds, is really to invite the invention of stereotypical ideas," according to a quotation from Roth (1961) in "Reading Myself and Others" (166).

The invention of Ozzie, his beliefs, and occasionally his naivete, which prevents him from realising the truth of his life and circumstances, are all manifestations of Roth's goal in writing "The Conversion of the Jews." Due to his Jewish heritage, Ozzie faces limitations and duties in American society that he must carry out. According to this worldview, Ozzie is not supposed to challenge, criticise, or disobey the highest religious authority—in this case, Rabbi Binder—because he is a part of the Jewish community. For instance, Ozzie's most persistent inquiry is to explain how God, who is able to "create heaven and earth in six days," could not possibly "let a woman have a baby without having intercourse" (140–141). Mrs. Freedman, who has seen a rebellious streak in her child's personality, finds Ozzie's defiance of authority to be quite concerning. Roth reminds us, through Ozzie's words, that what he meant to ask is different because Binder's account of Jesus' historical presence falls short of explaining how it is impossible for a woman to give birth without having sex, if God so chooses (141). Examining Ozzie's greatest achievement in this area in light of the notion that people are naturally curious creatures and the passage from Roth's "Reading Myself and Others" Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect a thinking person to heedlessly accept the ideas that religious leaders instill in them.

Several of the text's dialogues are intriguing in the way they incorporate Jewish religious views and values with the realities of American identity and society's foundations. In one especially fascinating interaction, Ozzie, for instance, questions how his religious group can proclaim Jews to be "The Chosen People" while the American society he belongs to upholds the Declaration of Independence's guarantees of equality for all people (141). The interpretation of this investigation can be made in the context of Ozzie's apparent spiritual crisis as well as how Roth uses Ozzie's words to express his ideals in order to protect the Jewish community from being stereotyped. The reader can comprehend through Ozzie's speech that religion in and of itself is inadmissible as a criterion for categorising people into superior and inferior groups. The very fact that we are human is reason enough to support the practice of equality in society; therefore, the criteria for political equality or spiritual

legitimacy should not be understood as the means by which one group of people is judged to be superior to another.

Most significantly, it's critical for Ozzie to understand the difference between religion and faith as a teenager with a naturally curious disposition. In this scenario, religion is limited to the teachings of those that one is compelled to acknowledge as authoritative figures, in Ozzie's case, mostly Rabbi Binder and his mother. Therefore, rather than going through a "crisis of religion," the young person is going through what is known as a "crisis of faith," because, although societal pressures may prevent him from publicly denouncing his religion, one's faith, which is ingrained in one's heart and mind, can be subject to doubts that exist even though they do not surface for everyone to judge and see. From an early age, Ozzie has been on a path of self-discovery due to the thoughts that force him to recognise the conflict between his religion, society, and rationality. Therefore, in the context of this evaluation, Ozzie's remarks seem to accomplish the ultimate goal of inspiring readers to reflect and consider what seems wrong or bothersome about the values that underpin their entire existence.

According to Roth, the purpose of "The Conversion of the Jews" is to start a constructive discussion regarding the place of the Jewish community in a society that may, due to its many peculiarities, be at odds with Jewish religious beliefs. Furthermore, the work's message in the situation it presents aims to teach people about better qualities and deeds, such love, acceptance, and most significantly, tolerance—the latter of which is arguably most lacking in today's culture.

Werlock (2009) points out that Ozzie's decision to go towards the firemen's net ushers in a new phase of his early life, one that is characterised by moral ambiguity and a struggle to forge an identity that will appeal to both the adolescent's Jewish cultural heritage and the greater American society. As we watch Ozzie get sucked into the web, Roth presents the reader with an unanswered mystery. Does Ozzie's escape into a moral void symbolised by the firemen's net, or does it indicate that he has been pulled off the brink of a crisis of faith and identity? The book ends with Ozzie ordering the people who have gathered to see him on the roof of the synagogue to kneel before him. This suggests that not only has Ozzie overcome his crisis of faith, but his act of defiance has made sure that no one in his community would be punished for their religious beliefs.