Arthur Miller was born on 17th October 1915 in Harlem. He was the son of Polish immigrants and his parents enjoyed good prosperity up until the Wall Street Crash of 1929. Financial hardship forced the Miller family to move to Brooklyn in 1929. He was not a good student and in fact he failed to graduate from High School, and his initial working career involved a mixture of labouring jobs either in the country or on the New York Waterfront. Miller learned much about life at the sharp end, and this was to stand him in good stead when he commenced his literary career. In fact, his work ‘A View from the Bridge’ dealt with life on the waterfront.

His work in the countryside gave him the inspiration for the movie, ‘The Misfits’ which starred his late wife Marilyn Monroe. It was whilst he was earning a meagre wage from menial work that he started to read extensively, and he decided that a literary career should be the goal to aim for. He was able to convince the University of Michigan to take him on as a student although he had never graduated from High School.

He supported himself at University by working on a Newspaper and entering literary competitions. He graduated in 1938 and returned to New York. He soon became involved in writing scripts for radio and the theatre. Much of his work has the common thread of dealing with the problems faced by the man in the street.

His first major success was the play, ‘All My Sons’ published in 1947. This was followed by ‘Death of a Salesman’ published in 1949 and which won the Pulitzer Prize. Many misinterpreted Miller’s views regarding the common man as being sympathetic with communism, and he was subsequently investigated in 1947 by the House Un-American Activities Committee, but was completed cleared by the Committee.

‘The Crucible’ was published in 1953 and there is no doubt that Miller is making a direct comparison in this book of the Salem Witch Trials with the McCarthy Hunt for Communists. However, it is to do the work injustice by viewing it as merely a swipe against the McCarthy era, and there is a far deeper message in this work concerning human nature and mass hysteria.

Miller was married to Marilyn Monroe in 1955 and he wrote the screenplay of ‘The Misfits’ for her in 1961. ‘After the fall’ was published in 1964, and is a fictionalised account of his relationship with Marilyn. Also in 1964, he wrote ‘Incident at Vichy’. Other works include ‘Fame’ 1970, ‘The American Clock’ 1980, ‘Elegy for a Lady’ 1982, and in the same year ‘Some Kind of Love Story’.
Miller wrote the screenplay for the movie version of ‘The Crucible’, which was released in 1996. In addition to the Pulitzer Prize, Miller has received numerous awards over the years, including The Gold Medal for Drama, by the National Institutes of Arts and Letters. In 1965 he was elected President of Poets, Essayists and Novelists.

**Background to the Crucible**

Before the Crucible:

The playwright Arthur Miller was born in New York on 17 October 1915, to a non-Orthodox Jewish family. Miller had a comfortable childhood, but when his father was ruined in the Depression of 1929, the family moved to Brooklyn, at that time almost a country suburb. Arthur Miller's school career was unpromising; he worked briefly in his father's business and then took a variety of casual jobs, some of them manual, which provided the background for several plays.

Miller began to read extensively, and applied for a place at the University of Michigan to study journalism. As a student, he wrote award-winning dramas and began to think of playwriting as a career. After graduating in 1938 he returned to New York, where he worked on various theatre projects, but was eventually forced to return to manual work. In 1940, he married an old college friend. When the USA entered World War II in 1941, he was rejected for military service because of an old sports' injury.

Miller was beginning to be successful in other forms of writing, but his main interest was in live theatre. His first Broadway play won the Theatre Guild National Award but was not a commercial success. During this long apprenticeship, Miller was hammering out the themes central to his best-known work - the link between social commitment and personal integrity, the individual's need to confront his past, and conflict within the family. A chance conversation provided the idea for his first widely acclaimed play, All My Sons (1947). Death of a Salesman (1949) had an even longer run, and was performed worldwide.

The Cold War and Senator McCarthy

After the end of the World War II, America became locked in political rivalry with Communist Russia. This was the so-called Cold War. The threat of nuclear weapons hung over the two superpowers' struggle for dominance. In June 1950, when Russia's ally, Communist China, began to expand into South-East Asia, America embarked on the Korean War. This conflict had an enormous effect on the political climate at home. Fear that Communists were infiltrating Government led to the rise of Senator Joseph McCarthy, the most prominent figure in a committee that scrutinized possible suspects. His investigations were aimed particularly at university teachers, trade unionists, and artists of all kinds—anyone suspected of left-wing sympathies. Those called before the Un-American Activities Committee were asked to prove their innocence by naming others. Some witnesses caved in; others lost their jobs. There were many suicides.
It was against this background that Miller wrote The Crucible. The Salem witch trials had fascinated him long before he saw their possibility as an allegory for McCarthyism. The play opened in January 1953, and won two prestigious awards, but the critics were distracted by the obvious parallel with contemporary events.

In 1956 Miller found himself in the same dilemma as his hero, John Proctor. He was refused a passport to visit Brussels for a production of his play. The committee called on him to testify. When Miller refused to mention names, he was fined and given a suspended prison sentence. The Supreme Court acquitted him a year and a half later. By then McCarthy himself was dead.

The Crucible

The Crucible is Miller's most frequently produced work. As the McCarthy era receded, it became easier to assess the merits of the play and realize that it has a universal significance outside the context of a particular crisis in American history. Miller himself is pleased at his development.

A crucible is a melting pot or vessel in which crude ore is heated to a temperature that makes it release the pure metal. The metaphor applies most of all to the hero, John Proctor, who finds his true self by enduring a different kind of purification; but it is almost as apt for several other characters as well as for the whole community that suffered from these tragic events.

**Historical Background to “The Crucible”**

Puritans in North America

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, some English trading companies started to send settlers to North America. Among them were the Pilgrim Fathers, who crossed the Atlantic in the Mayflower and landed in Massachusetts on 21 November 1620. Ten years later, about a thousand Puritans settled around Massachusetts Bay, in the area later known as New England. They brought with them a royal charter to set up a colony ruled by a Governor and General Court. A Puritan elite of politicians and clergymen imposed a strict administration on the new colony. As well as reclaiming land from the forest, the settlers had to come to terms with the Native American tribes and periodic outbreaks of smallpox.

By 1692, there were marked differences between the various centres of population. Trade and education flourished in towns like Boston; inland areas were much less safe and prosperous. Several other factors caused unrest. While the colony awaited the arrival of a new charter from England, its laws, including those on land tenure, were technically suspended. The rulers felt their grasp slipping.

Salem
The village had developed as the agricultural hinterland of Salem, a thriving trading town on the coast five miles away. Rivers and sea inlets lay between the town and the village, which was in reality a collection of scattered farmsteads. Farmers living further inland had to grow their produce on much less fertile terrain. Added to jealousies about land were disputes over appointing a minister. The town continued to demand taxes to exercise authority over the villagers.

Puritanism

Although officially part of the Church of England, the 1630 Puritans were closer in belief and practice to Presbyterian Calvinism. They believed that every soul was predestined for Heaven or Hell. Old Testament law applied to every area of life. The Puritans blamed any temptations to break their stern code on the Devil and other evil spirits. Those who broke the rules had to confess in public and suffer severe punishment. To work on Sunday was a serious offence. The Puritans disapproved of most forms of relaxation. They confined private reading to the Bible and other religious texts. Children had to live up to this code of behaviour from their earliest years and take their share of adult work from the age of seven. Miller discusses the effects of this highly demanding self-discipline in his notes to Act I of The Crucible.

Witchcraft

Like most people in the seventeenth century, the Puritans believed in witches. The idea of witchcraft existed long before the Christian era. The Old Testament states, “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live”. This was the basis of the witchcraft laws. In prehistoric societies, magic and sorcery were a feature of religion; the early Christian Church regarded them as the remains of paganism. There were laws against the practice of witchcraft, but no systematic persecution.

Anxieties began to increase when the Church declared (1320) that magic and witchcraft involved a pact with the Devil. From then on they were classed as heresy, carrying the penalty of eternal damnation. The reformed Protestant Church shared these views. Whereas ordinary people worried about the harm witches might do them, the Church regarded every lost soul as a defeat in the war between God and the Devil. A reader can notice this difference in The Crucible.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, thousands were put to death for witchcraft. When medicine and veterinary science were at such a primitive stage, disease and sudden death could seem to result from a spell cast by a spiteful neighbour. Those thought to be witches were male and female, of all ages and social ranks, but most of them were elderly women.

The most famous handbook on witchcraft was Malleus Maleficarum (“The Witches’ Hammer”). This might have been one of the books weighted with authority that Reverend Hale brings to Salem.
The Salem Witch-Hunt

There were several witchcraft trials in Massachusetts before 1692. Two involved adolescent girls suffering hysterical fits similar to those seen in Salem. In January 1692, the daughter and niece of the village parson, Reverend Parris, having experimented with fortune-telling began to gabble nonsense and twist their limbs into grotesque positions. They claimed that the spirit of Parris’s West Indian slave Tituba was tormenting them. Soon more young girls began to display the same symptoms. Tituba and two other women were arrested on the charge of bewitching them.

Over the following months the number of hysterical girls increased, as did the people they accused. The youngest victim was a child aged four. The defendants were jailed, but not tried until June, when the new governor set up his official court, which decided to allow ‘spectral evidence’; that is, the girls’ allegation that the witches were sending out their invisible spirits. The witch-hunt spread and scores of people went to prison. Those that confessed were reprieved. Six men and thirteen women were hanged. Since prisoners had to pay for their keep, many families went bankrupt. Doubts arose about the ‘spectral evidence’, particularly when the girls began naming prominent people. The Governor intervened, and in May, 1693, the remaining accused were set free, apart from those who could not pay their prison charges.

How Historically Correct is The Crucible?

The Crucible keeps close to what we know about events in 1692. Much of the dialogue repeats the enquiry documents word for word. Miller made changes for practical dramatic reasons or to emphasize the themes of the play. Here are some reasons for Miller’s attempt to make some alterations.

All characters in The Crucible are taken from official documents, but the number of persons involved in the witch-hunt is greatly reduced. The fortune telling becomes a more dramatic expedition into the Devil-haunted forest. The date when the hysteria began is advanced from winter to spring. Several execution dates are altered; for example, John Proctor did not die with Rebecca Nurse. Miller also standardizes the ages of the girls; apart from Betty Parris, they are all teenagers. In reality, they spanned a much wider age range and included several adults.

The only piece of pure invention is the relationship between Abigail Williams and John Proctor. In 1692 he was a man in his sixties and she was a girl of 11. However, the invented relationship rings true to the repression of Puritan society and forms a dynamic centre around which the whole story develops.

Such discrepancies are less important than the themes developed in the text. Like all great plays, The Crucible speaks to us about universal human issues. The details of place and time are merely the playwright’s way of creating his ideas in flesh and blood.
Introduction to the Crucible by Arthur Miller

Introduction

A “crucible” is a severe test, or a trial. It is also a container that can withstand great heat. As it passes through a furnace, the metals and ores within it are transformed in some way. For the characters in The Crucible, the Salem witch hunt is the trial from which they emerge utterly changed. As each character passes through the furnace of lies, vengeance, greed and torture, he is either purified or corrupted. For John Proctor, the heat is especially intense, and the struggle toward goodness is laden with many traps and obstacles.

All the characters in The Crucible are based on real persons who lived in Salem in 1692. For dramatic purposes, several characters have sometimes been fused into one and small details have been changed. In general, however, the actions of the characters are closely matched to the actions of their historical counterparts. Miller researched the period exhaustively and wanted his play to be as true to the historical records as possible. See Appendix I for some of these records.

Although The Crucible offers many parallels with our own time, it also makes use of many ideas and attitudes that were unique to Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. Some knowledge of life in Salem is needed to fully understand the play. The following material, therefore, explains basic Puritan customs and beliefs, and offers a summary of the actual Salem witch hunt. In addition, this introduction looks at Miller’s use of the witch hunt to comment on the McCarthy hearings of the 1950s.

The Puritans

In 1620, the Puritans landed at Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts and founded the first permanent settlement in New England. They had left England to escape religious persecution and to establish a New Jerusalem in the New World. This Promised Land, however, contained many new dangers. In the face of a harsh climate, fierce animals, hostile Indians and a vast, godless wilderness, the Puritans drew together in a tightly unified group with extremely strict rules and an autocratic leadership. Through a combination of bitterly hard work, rigid discipline and harsh justice, the Puritans succeeded in taming the land that no one before them could conquer.

The Puritan government was a theocracy; that is, it was completely controlled by the Puritan church. The ministers of the church were also the town officers and administrators. Because the Puritans believed that they were the new Chosen People, they did not permit members of any other religion to corrupt their pure society. Those who did not belong to the church could not hold property or vote. In addition, those who did not attend church regularly or follow the church regulations could be excommunicated, thereby losing all their property and rights.
In The Crucible, Deputy Governor Danforth is the perfect example of a theocratic ruler. Because he believes that he speaks for God, he cannot accept the possibility that he has been wrong. In his ruthless judgments, he holds to the strict letter of the law, for “While I speak God’s law, I will not crack its voice with whimpering.”

“God’s law” for the Puritans was certainly strict. Anything that distracted them from hard work was part of the Devil’s plan to destroy them. There were no celebrations or holidays, no theaters or novels and no children’s games or entertainments. Dancing was considered a serious sin. It was natural, then, that Abigail and the other girls felt a need to dance in the woods. Their youthful high spirits had no other outlet. It was also natural that they should lie to cover up their “sin.” If they had been found out, they would probably have been whipped.

In addition to viewing pleasure as sinful, the Puritans saw sex as a necessary evil, to be practised joylessly only between a man and his wife. As John Proctor knew only too well, adultery was considered a hideous crime and could easily result in excommunication and the loss of one’s property. Some historical analysts believe that this sexual repression was directly responsible for the mass hysteria that produced the witch hunt. In The Crucible, Abigail’s dislike for the people of Salem is largely based on her contempt for this repression.

The Puritans believed that everything stated in the Bible was literally true. The Devil was very real to them, always trying to tempt them away from their work and God’s laws. Moreover, the Devil was a cunning and extremely powerful opponent. Once he set out to destroy a soul, there was almost nothing the person could do to prevent it. As Abigail angrily tells Deputy Governor Danforth: “Think you to be so mighty that the power of Hell may not turn your wits? Beware of it!”

This grim sense of man’s powerlessness was also found in other aspects of Puritan life. The Puritans believed in the doctrine of the elect. According to this fatalistic belief, only a few people would be chosen by God to be saved from Hell. There was nothing a person could do to earn a place among the elect. No amount of good works or righteous living could help. All a person could do was live an upright life in the blind hope that he might be one of the few who were chosen.

A major reason why salvation was so difficult to attain is found in the Puritans’ adaptation of the doctrine of original sin. According to the Puritans, each person at birth is already evil and on the verge of eternal damnation. As Jonathan Edwards, a famed Puritan minister, once preached, “The God that holds you over the pit of Hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire . . . .” In The Crucible, Parris also preached “hellfire and bloody damnation” in his sermons, much to Proctor’s disgust.
Not only was man born an evil sinner, but his sins could not be washed away. Therefore, every person concealed guilt in his heart from which he could never be free. In The Crucible, John Proctor is deeply troubled with guilt as a result of his adulterous affair with Abigail. He tries to bury this guilt by pretending it doesn’t exist. Nonetheless, as Elizabeth tells him, “The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you.”

Although their guilt could never be entirely removed, it was sometimes possible for Puritans who sinned to regain the path of righteousness. First, however, they had to publicly confess their sins and perform some act of penance. This policy of open confession was carried to absurd lengths during the witch hunt. Those accused of witchcraft could either confess to lies or hang. Not surprisingly, most chose to confess.

Because the Puritans’ legal system was used to uphold religious laws, many such absurdities were possible. Over the centuries, Western society has developed “due process of law” so that the truth can be uncovered. This due process uses witnesses and other hard evidence to prove whether a person is innocent or guilty. The accused is also granted certain rights so that he can defend himself. The Puritans, however, could not rely on due process to get at the truth. Because religious crimes involved magic and invisibility, there could be no witnesses or hard evidence.

In The Crucible, Deputy Governor Danforth sums up the absurdity of the Puritan court when he explains that witchcraft is an invisible crime. Only the witch and her victim can possibly witness this crime, and the witch would never accuse herself. Therefore, the victim's testimony must always be accurate. As a result of this absurd reasoning, the Puritans had no way of objectively finding out the truth. When the lack of due process was combined with the false confessions, the door was opened to a reign of terror in which rumors, lies and superstitions ruled the courts.

In summary, then, virtually every aspect of a Puritan’s life fell under the strict control of the church. Rigid discipline was enforced, and pleasures were forbidden. Personal rights were few and could be suspended at any time. Personal freedoms were virtually non-existent. Life for the early Puritans was a constant battle against the harsh climate, the vast wilderness and the temptations of Satan. Even for those who won that battle, divine salvation was by no means guaranteed.

By 1692, however, the land had been partly tamed and the surrounding wilderness was no longer so terrifying. The need for rigid discipline, hard work and tight unity was no longer as great as it had been. To the great concern of the church, many Puritans began to feel the need for more personal rights and freedoms. Ultimately, the church’s struggle to maintain its authority against ever-increasing opposition erupted into the full--blown hysteria of the Salem witch hunt.

Witchcraft among the Puritans
The persecution of witches was by no means limited to the Puritans in New England. During the 17th and early 18th centuries, tens of thousands of people were executed as witches throughout Europe and the Americas. The Roman Catholic Inquisition was especially bloodthirsty in its relentless pursuit of those who practised the black arts.

It is not surprising that the fear of witchcraft took such a hold among the New England Puritans. As fundamentalists, they believed every word that was written in the Bible. Moses’ statement, “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,” was well known by almost everyone in the colony. In The Crucible, when Elizabeth Proctor suggests that witches do not exist, Reverend Hale scolds her, “You surely do not fly against the Gospel, the Gospel —.”

The Puritans deeply believed in evil as a tangible force in the world. The Devil was a real being, the lord of the angels cast out of heaven for betraying God. Since his fall, the Devil had worked constantly to destroy God’s kingdom on earth by tempting God’s subjects away from Him.

Because the Puritans believed that their colony was the center of God’s earthly kingdom, they believed that the Devil was focusing all his attention on their destruction. The vast wilderness around them provided the Devil with many hiding places, as well as many heathen savages who willingly did his work. According to Puritan belief, once the colony was perfected the Devil would be banished forever. Because he knew this, he was attacking them now with all his power and might.

The Puritans, then, considered themselves soldiers in the midst of a great war against evil. The enemy was powerful, and capable of infinite deception. As Reverend Hale claims, “Until an hour before the Devil fell, God thought him beautiful in Heaven.” Human beings, on the other hand, were weak, born in sin and likely destined for damnation. To make matters even worse, the Devil had recruited many helpers among the Puritans themselves. These helpers were known as witches.

The belief in witchcraft is very ancient and can be found in almost all cultures. In general, a witch is a person who is believed to have supernatural powers. In many cultures, witches have been revered as wisewomen or healers. In others, they have been persecuted and killed.

As modern feminists point out, almost all of those who have been killed as witches have been women. Often these women directly challenged male authority. Many had become influential in their villages through the practice of midwifery or herbal medicine. Witchcraft has always been associated with the dark, irrational side of human nature, a side traditionally seen as female. In addition, many of the rituals associated with witchcraft are highly sexual in nature. Feminists argue that female sexuality is considered most threatening by male-dominated, sexually-repressed societies. Certainly, no more sexually-repressed a society has ever existed than that of the Puritans.
The Puritans were never really clear on exactly how witches helped the Devil in his battle for human souls. Apparently, a person became a witch by making an agreement with the Devil. The witch then “sent out” her invisible spirit to harm innocent people. Sometimes a witch entered an innocent person’s body and controlled his thoughts. A witch could also assume the shape of an innocent person while tormenting others, thereby framing the innocent person for crimes he didn’t commit.

Needless to say, all this resulted in a fair amount of legal confusion when charges against witches were laid. As Danforth pointed out, witchcraft was impossible to prove even with witnesses or hard evidence. In general, the word of the victim was taken, even though it was recognized that the Devil’s trickery may have caused an innocent person to be accused.

The absurdities do not end there. Any witch could end her contract with Satan simply by confessing to witchcraft. Since hanging was generally the alternative, many witches did indeed confess. Yet, presumably, a real witch would have no qualms about lying while pretending to confess. Meanwhile, a truly devout Puritan, such as Rebecca Nurse, would be unable to make a dishonest confession, and would therefore hang. In other words, the laws on witchcraft were such that the least devout Puritans lived while the most devout, who refused to lie, were hung.

In 1692, the Puritans believed that they had found the Devil’s center of attack in Salem, Massachusetts. As a result of the legal absurdities outlined above, the courts were turned over to hysteria, private vengeance and land greed. In what was to become known as “the delusion,” hundreds were arrested for witchcraft, and 20 innocent people lost their lives.

The Salem Witch Hunt

Salem does not seem to have ever been a very peaceful village. Long before the witch hunt, the people in the town had split into opposing factions as a result of land feuds and political disagreement. Because boundaries were somewhat unsettled, different claims were often made to the same tract of land.

In particular, a longstanding quarrel had developed between the Nurses and the Putnams, two of the largest and wealthiest families in the district. Various wills and deeds were contested in court through a long series of lawsuits. Over time, the quarrel grew as friends and distant relatives of both families took sides against one another.

This conflict was made more intense when Reverend Parris defeated the Putnams’ candidate to be elected as minister of Salem. Because Parris did not have a clear majority, his election was contested. Parris also angered many members of his congregation with his requests for free firewood, expensive church additions and the deed to the minister’s home.
Reverend Parris had a black servant, named Tituba, whom he had found in Barbados. Tituba's customs were considered strange and dangerous by the solemn Puritan townspeople. Eventually, she was caught teaching Parris' daughter, Betty, and niece, Abigail Williams, how to tell the future by reading palms. Tituba was punished, but the suspicion of witchcraft was firmly planted in the minds of the Salemites.

In February, 1692, Betty Parris began to suffer from some sort of fit. The doctors were baffled by her illness and suggested that it had a supernatural cause. Reverend Parris sent for the help of other ministers, and he tried to keep his daughter's illness hidden from the town. Word spread, however, and before long rumors of witchcraft were flying through Salem.

No one knows precisely what happened next. However, on February 29, 1692, the first three arrests for witchcraft were made. At this stage, the accused were all social outcasts. Tituba was a black servant from another country. Sarah Good was an old beggar woman. And Sarah Osborne seldom attended church and was considered immoral.

These three women were ordered to either confess to witchcraft or hang. Not surprisingly, they confessed. In their confessions, they were forced to accuse other Salemites of doing Satan's work. Before long, the jails were full of prisoners accused of witchcraft.

The role of Abigail Williams, Betty Parris, Mary Warren and others in these events is not quite clear. Quite possibly, Abigail and Betty made the first accusations against Tituba, Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne. Certainly, they made a number of later accusations, and many innocent people were found guilty as a result of the girls' testimony.

The witchcraft trials took place in Salem while the governor of Massachusetts was absent on a campaign against the Indians. In his place, Lieutenant Governor William Stroughton acted as chief justice. Stroughton was a strict Puritan who followed the law to the letter, and he totally believed in the existence of witchcraft. Like Danforth in The Crucible, he could not bear to have his authority questioned. Stroughton issued the first death warrant in Salem and personally witnessed the hanging that resulted.

The Salem trials began in March, 1692. For evidence, the court relied on the testimony of the young girls and on the confessions of those who were threatened with hanging. During the trials, 55 people confessed to being witches. The first hanging took place in June. Five others were hung on July 19, five on August 19, and eight on September 22. During this time, Giles Corey was pressed to death for refusing to plead guilty or not guilty. In addition, two dogs were hung as witches.

By October, 150 prisoners were still awaiting trial, and others had already been condemned to die. Many of these prisoners were highly respectable men and women whose arrests had raised a public outcry. The public had also been enraged by rumors.
that some important men had used their influence to prevent their wives’ arrests, while others had bribed the court to find their wives innocent. Salemites began to doubt the testimony of the young girls and question the false confessions.

Governor Phips ordered the court to find a more trust-worthy method of testing for witchcraft than the testimony of the girls. A series of meetings resulted with some ministers pro-testing the lack of hard evidence and rejecting the use of the forced confessions. Finally, on October 29, 1692, Governor Phips yielded to public pressure and put an end to the trials and executions.

The witch hunt continued to affect the lives of the people of Salem long after the last trial was over. Twenty Salemites were dead and their property confiscated. Many others had been excommunicated, and had lost their property and rights as a result.

Not until 1709, 17 years after the trials, did the survivors and the heirs of the victims feel free to ask the government for restitution. In 1711, some money was awarded as compensation. However, much of this money was given to informers rather than to victims or their heirs. The reputations of the accused were reinstated and, in 1712, the excommunications were reversed by government order.

As Miller notes at the end of The Crucible, some of the farms that had belonged to the accused witches were left to ruin for more than a century before anyone would dare to live in them again.

**The Crucible : Summary**

The Crucible, a historical play based on events of the Salem witchcraft trials, takes place in a small Puritan village in the colony of Massachusetts in 1692. The witchcraft trials, as Miller explains in a prose prologue to the play, grew out of the particular moral system of the Puritans, which promoted interference in others' affairs as well as a repressive code of conduct that frowned on any diversion from norms of behavior.

The play begins in the home of Reverend Samuel Parris, whose daughter, Betty, lays ill. Parris lives with his daughter and his seventeen-year old niece, Abigail Williams, an orphan who witnessed her parents' murder by the Indians. Parris has sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly, believing his daughter's illness stems from supernatural explanations. Betty became ill when her father discovered her dancing in the woods with Abigail, Tituba (the Parris' slave from Barbados) and several other local girls. Already there are rumors that Betty's illness is due to witchcraft, but Parris tells Abigail that he cannot admit that he found his daughter and niece dancing like heathens in the forest. Abigail says that she will admit to dancing and accept the punishment, but will not admit to witchcraft. Abigail and Parris discuss rumors about the girls: when they were dancing one of the girls was naked, and Tituba was screeching gibberish. Parris also brings up rumors that Abigail's former employer, Elizabeth Proctor, believes that Abby is immoral.
Thomas and Ann Putnam arrive and tell Parris that their daughter, Ruth, is sick. Ann Putnam admits that she sent Ruth to Tituba, for Tituba knows how to speak to the dead and could find out who murdered her seven children, each of whom died during infancy. When the adults leave, Abigail discusses Betty's illness with Mercy Lewis and Mary Warren, the servants of the Putnams and the Proctors, respectively. Abigail threatens them, warning them not to say anything more than that they danced and Tituba conjured Ruth's sisters. John Proctor arrives to find Mary and send her home. He speaks with Abigail alone, and she admits to him about the dancing. In the past, John and Abigail had an affair, which is the reason why Elizabeth Proctor fired her. Abigail propositions John, but he sternly refuses her. When Betty hears people singing psalms from outside, she begins to shriek. Reverend Parris returns, and realizes that Betty cannot bear to hear the Lord's name.

Giles Corey and Rebecca Nurse are the next to visit. The former is a contentious old man, while the latter is a well-respected old woman. Rebecca claims that Betty's illness is nothing serious, but merely a childish phase. Parris confronts Proctor because he has not been in church recently, but Proctor claims that Parris is too obsessed with damnation and never mentions God.

Reverend John Hale arrives from Beverly, a scholarly man who looks for precise signs of the supernatural. Parris tells him about the dancing and the conjuring, while Giles Corey asks if there is any significance to his wife's reading strange books. Hale questions Abigail, asking if she sold her soul to Lucifer. Finally Abigail blames Tituba, claiming that Tituba made Abigail and Betty drink blood and that Tituba sends her spirit out to make mischief. Putnam declares that Tituba must be hanged, but Hale confronts her. Upon realizing that the only way to save herself is to admit to the charge, Tituba claims that the devil came to her and promised to return her to Barbados. She says that several women were with him, including Sarah Good and Sarah Osburn, and the girls join in the chorus of accusations, name more people they claim to have seen with the devil.

The second act takes place a week later in the Proctor's home. John Proctor returns home late after a long day planting in the fields, and Elizabeth suspects that he has been in the village. Mary Warren has been there as an official of the court for the witchcraft trials, even after Elizabeth forbade her. Elizabeth tells John that she must tell Ezekiel Cheever, the constable that Abigail admitted that Betty's sickness has nothing to do with witchcraft, but Proctor admits that nobody will believe him because he was alone with Abigail at the time. Elizabeth is disturbed by this, but Proctor reprimands her for her suspicion. Mary Warren arrives and gives Elizabeth a poppet that she made in court. Mary tells them that thirty-nine people have been arrested and Sarah Osburn will hang, but not Sarah Good, who confessed. When Proctor becomes angry at Mary, she tells him that she saved Elizabeth's life today, for her name was mentioned in court.

John Hale arrives. He tells the Proctors that Rebecca Nurse was charged, then questions Proctor on his churchgoing habits. Finally he makes Proctor state the Ten Commandments; he can remember nine of the ten, but Elizabeth must remind him of...
adultery. Proctor tells Hale what Abigail admitted about Parris discovering her in the woods, but Hale says that it must be nonsense, for so many have confessed to witchcraft. Proctor reminds him that these people would certainly confess, if denying it means that they be hanged. Hale asks Proctor whether he believes in witches, and he says that he does, but not those in Salem. Elizabeth denies all belief in witchcraft, for she believes that the devil cannot take a woman's soul if she is truly upright.

Ezekiel Cheever arrives to arrest Elizabeth on the charge that she sent her spirit out to Abigail and stuck a needle in her. Cheever finds the poppet, which has a needle in it, but Mary Warren says that she made the poppet in court that day, although Abigail witnessed her making it. Upon hearing the charge, Elizabeth claims that Abigail is a murderer who must be ripped out of the world. Proctor rips up the warrant and tells Cheever that he will not give his wife to vengeance. When Hale insists that the court is just, Proctor calls him a Pontius Pilate. He finally demands that Mary Warren come to court and testify against Abigail, but she sobs that she cannot.

The third act takes place in the vestry room of the Salem meeting house, which serves the court. Giles Corey arrives with Francis Nurse and tells Deputy Governor Danforth, who presides over the trials, that Thomas Putnam is charging people with witchcraft in order to gain their land. He also says that he meant nothing when he said that his wife read strange books.

John Proctor arrives with Mary Warren, and presents a deposition signed by Mary that asserts that she never saw any spirits. Parris thinks that they are there to overthrow the court, and Danforth questions whether Proctor has any ulterior motive, and tells Proctor that his wife is pregnant and thus will live at least one more year, even if convicted. Proctor also presents a petition signed by ninety-one people attesting to the good character of Elizabeth Proctor, Rebecca Nurse and Martha Corey. Parris claims that this is an attack upon the court, but Hale asks Parris if every defense is an attack on it.

Putnam arrives at the court, and Giles Corey charges him with murder. Giles tells Danforth that someone told him that Putnam prompted his daughter to accuse George Jacobs so that he could buy his land. Giles refuses to name this person, and so is arrested for contempt. Abigail then arrives with the other girls, and Proctor tells Danforth how Abigail means to murder his wife. Abigail pretends that she feels a sharp wind threatening her. Proctor grabs her by the hair and calls her a whore, finally admitting his affair.

Danforth orders that Elizabeth be brought to the court. If Elizabeth admits to firing Abigail for her affair, Danforth will charge Abigail with murder. Elizabeth, thinking that she is defending her husband, only claims that she fired Abigail because of poor work habits. Proctor cries out for Elizabeth to tell the truth, and Hale admits that Elizabeth's lie is a natural one to tell. Abigail then claims that Mary Warren's spirit is attacking her in the form of a bird. Although Mary claims that the girls are lying, she soon breaks down and tells Danforth that Proctor is in league with Satan and wants to pull down the court.
Proctor cries out that God is dead, and that a fire is burning in Hell because the court is pulling Heaven down and raising up a whore. Hale denounces the proceedings and quits the court.

The fourth act takes place several months later in the autumn at the Salem jail cell. Cheever details how the town is in shambles because so many people are in jail. Hale has been begging Rebecca Nurse to admit to witchcraft. Parris arrives and tells Danforth how Abigail has vanished with Mercy Lewis and stolen his money. Parris worries about the rumors of rebellion against the witchcraft proceedings in Andover, but Hathorne reminds Parris how there has only been great satisfaction in all of the Salem executions. Parris reminds him that Rebecca Nurse is no immoral woman like the others executed and there will be consequences to her execution. Still, Danforth refuses to postpone any of the executions.

Danforth calls for Elizabeth Proctor, and Hale tells her that he does not want Proctor to die, for he would feel responsible for the murder. He tells Elizabeth that God may damn a liar less than a person who throws one's life away, but Elizabeth claims that this may be the Devil's argument. Finally Elizabeth agrees to speak with Proctor, who is brought in bearded and filthy. Proctor and Elizabeth discuss their children, and Elizabeth tells him how Giles Corey died: when he refused to answer yes or no to his indictment, and was thus pressed with stones until he would answer. He only gave the words "more weight" before they crushed him.

Proctor says that he cannot mount the gibbet as a saint, for it would be a fraud to claim that he has never lied. Elizabeth says that she has her own sins, for only a cold wife would prompt lechery. Finally Proctor decides that he will confess himself. Danforth demands a written confession and, to prove the purity of his soul, he demands that Proctor accuse others. Hale suggests that it is sufficient for Proctor to confess to God, but Danforth still requires a written statement. Proctor refuses, because he wishes only to keep his good name for the respectability of his children. Danforth refuses to accept his confession, and orders that he be hanged. Hale begs Elizabeth to plead with Proctor to sign a confession, but Elizabeth claims that Proctor now has his goodness, and nobody should take it away from him.

** Literary Analysis the Crucible by Arthur Miller **

We are least likely tempted to think that McCarthyism is something that happened when Senator McCarthy was in parliament. When we look around, we see some similar events happening, probably not witch hunting, but some similar chasing where people end up in frames for murder, in isolation charged up with treason and terrorism, or treated differently because of their race, sex, weight, colour, religious and educational background. With punishments ranging from being denied basic human rights and privileges common to other citizens to death, these differential treatments in many ways resemble McCarthyism. In Miller's "The Crucible", one political status or choice was superior to another, and, relativism in shambles. At this time in the US history, those
who allegedly became Communists or connived with Communists were labelled Un-American and thus exposed to harsh treatment. The Crucible was indeed an extremely hot furnace that collected molten undesirable ones at the bottom. The result is we are compelled to investigate why Un-Americans deserved the furnace.

During McCarthyism, there seemed to be fear for wickedness linked with alleged witches and supposed un-Americans. Senator McCarthy felt that citizens who aligned with Communist Party deserved verile treatment. Because there was only circumstantial evidence in these charges, we want to believe that witchcraft and Communism were at least not directly linked with the said accusations. Looking at the Mona Lisa we sense darkness which we may associate with Mona Lisa, or with the artist, Leonardo da Vinci. Yet the laws of Physics make it possible for us to understand that shadows do not necessarily come from the objects closest to them. With the witches, Un-Americans and Communists, their seeming wickedness is like a shadow in Lisa's background.

Since time immemorial, we have not reached a consensus about things we claim to know. There are views that we are born with the knowledge, views that we acquire knowledge later on, and views that knowledge is both innate and acquired inspite of which there is still lack on consensus on what we claim to know and on who is the witch or communist. Those who have absolute knowledge seem to be in a better position to prosecute witches, un-Americans, Jews, Black, Gays and, etc, etc and that is none of us. This is not to say we should get rid of punishment altogether, but, it is we shall find out as we read along, to be careful about severity of punishment we exercise on others because we do not raise the dead.

In the Crucible, Proctor's perspective of the then justice systems seems diminutive. The double-edgedness of the courthouse is the court in paradox, a conflict in the legal system. Of course Elizabeth is satirically paradoxical about the justice system, poking fun at its character and Miller makes the whole thing sound even more comical by speaking through Elizabeth's point of view. The comedy is in the irony about a witch and a woman being a mouthpiece when women were chief engineers of the well-wished witchcraft. Miller sees contradiction in what the government of the time purported to do and what it actually did. A government that preached freedom of choice concomitantly advocated for limited freedom in certain areas, those in opposition with the desires of the rulers. The government supposedly works hard to rid itself of the oppressive communism. Miller projects the conflicting nature of this set up through Elizabeth who sees contradiction in the legal system. According to Elizabeth, a magistrate can only judge is he "is" in someone's heart. YET this magistrate who is not even "sitting" in the victim's heart can judge about the same heart he is not sitting in. Evidently, Elizabeth not only seems to think that the justice system is not a serious issue, but also a laughing matter. Hence Miller infuses the story with sarcasm and laughter, shocking us into realities about events of the time through over dramatisation. Straight facts would probably not arouse much interest in us and Miller was aware of this.
Most of us like carton and comic book characters and therefore this overdramatisation becomes a perfect psychological trap for readers. His intention is therefore possibly not so much to draw us to the outward appearance of the realities, the physical condition of a building or of a flying witch. This would be too common an alert. The inner "reality" of the building, its ambience, would probably be much more exciting to explore as would be the trajectory laws that explain a flight of a woman is accused through a window.

The impressionist that he is, Miller strategically, caricatures the magistrate, the justice system, so that he ironically does not get in trouble with the law by openly condemning the government. Yet the image he paints of the legal system creates alienation of the superstructure both in and outside the text. Amazingly, Miller manages to engage us in a reactionary state where we unceasingly question and demand answers about crookedness in administration of justice. Metaphorically speaking we ask: just how little is this magistrate to fit in a heart? The idea of a little magistrate not only reduces the magistrate’s stature but also his intelligence. We are drawn to the magistrate’s stupidity in which he appears to put himself into a position he cannot actually fill because literally speaking, he cannot sit in a heart.

The magistrates and those who subject others to these blast furnaces purportedly hold some real standard of what ought to be done or what ought to happen over those who are seemingly astray. Such seem to consider themselves authors of standard truth. Ultimately those who have and who have no standard of truth are viewed in terms of good and evil. For those who believe in some source of all things, there is a dichotomy of moral and amoral. For those who do not think in these terms, things just are. Even in the last case where things just are, some kind of plane or planes of originality for just being is assumed. Yet we must be aware that this latter faction is not an argument in for persecution of Un-Americans where the tension was between two distinct states of Un-American and American. Thus our proposition to treat our argument under the common, least understood notions of good and evil is valid.

Steven Wallace in his The High Toned Christian Woman introduces in the form of hierarchy, an allegory of where morality lies. In the title, "A High-Toned Old Christian Woman" high could reference a place removed form the normal and also in the first line where he talks to madame’. Here he says that the fundamental principles of morality lie in part of the extension’, our palms. Even principles opposing morality lie in the same extension. The poem says that this morality is our conscience. It is ethics, which, like the "nave" in the church, is integral to knowledge. Those lacking in moral decency are so impure and taken in by moral wrecklessness that they cannot even be summoned by the call for death, just as those with good morals haunt heaven. Both actions unite in their source, a yearning for something as does our conscience or ethics in the extension.

We see clearly from this poem that we may only speculate about where morality and immorality originate from, but that both appear to be of some abstract origin. As a result it seems a little too farfetched to claim to have some portable yardstick to measure things that are both so intangible. In actual fact we will see that McCarthyism a
sophisticated reference for UnAmericannes shares similar philosophies with Americannes in that both are founded on intangible commonalities. The former purportedly evil, and the latter, not evil, both emanate from some abstract commonness that creates a contrast for us to distinguish between the two.

Yet we often speak of evil as though it becomes evil on its own, as though it stems from its own root, forgetting that we learn that evil is what it is by comparison with what it is not, good. What in part makes the two levels of morality comparable is that they are opposites. That is, besides being reverted in the ways that they are, there is still a feel of similarity between the two components of ethics. For example, with palms facing the same direction, we can slide one hand under the other to create opposites. We cannot speak of one hand being good without having the evil hand to compare it with. In the same fashion the immoral McCarthyism and moral anti-McCarthyism both have something that unites them, some common existence that makes the comparison feasible. With palms, the commonality is our hands, the stems for palms, with McCarthyism and anti-McCarthyism, their ethereal foundations. We agree that we cannot say for certain where our hands, our moral ethics, originate from. That is, without fully understanding the difference between these extremes of morality, it should be almost impossible to substantiate our prejudice against either extreme.

One might argue that this example of palms does not quiet represents the situation with good and evil and hence with Americannes and UnAmericannes. Alright. Let us say it does not. Now we create a different organisation of fingers, juggled around in all sorts of possible orders, something like a permutation. We can do this arrangement with one or both hands; in the end it shall not matter. The newly formed hands continue to be the same, even when the arrangement of one is not the same. Their handness shall abide with both. This is to us, at least as far us our imagination may take us, their tentative originality. The same applies to the origin of moral ethics of Un-Americans and those of Americans. We may never know what or how precisely the two diverge before transition but what we know for certain is that something about the genesis of their moral ethics is inherently similar. What gives us this assurance is that Un-Americans were once Americans and their reverting to a different status should not remove whatever elements that persist in both groups. Even if we want to argue that by reverting to a different state, Un-Americans were completely transformed, there is no doubt that both groups are human. But this supposed transformation, then perceived most akin to irrecoverable mental illness, is not mentioned in the accounts about those who were persecuted for their Un-Americananness. In any case the accused would still at least qualify them as human like the rest of the Americans, which is more. Thus there is that element that makes Americans and Un-American the same, and another, which is labels that makes them different. This is the exact difference between a normal person and a "witch" in Salem, and a normal person and a "gay one" in the heart of the current affairs today.

Authors of old have made the same cries about this moral absurdity - we must investigate punishments that we base on amorality and morality, whose foundations we barely comprehend. In the Victorian Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge where the
adoption of Elizabeth-Jane by Lucetta brings Farfrae and Hanchard together, the good and the bad, moral or immoral are glued together by necessity, and us with a moral dilemma about making judgments and punishing on them. When nature is itself so intertwined, entangled with the so-called moral and amoral, to punish people who are innately part of the universe can indeed be a laughing stock.

Later on in puritan Salem history, Hawthorne addresses the same dilemma. In his The Scarlet Letter. Hester becomes the necessary evil by which we can understand the customs of the Puritan society. How could we gauge the weight of Hester's immorality without her being set apart as evil? When we destroy Hester, what kind of measurement do we achieve by comparing something that would be good with what is not there, with the destroyed evil? Thus on examination we are happy with the contrast darkness or evil against light or good because that is the easiest way for us to learn about ourselves. Even though we may chose not to openly admit become appreciative of Hester's role as the dirty model, we actually do in private appreciate enjoy her being naughty, our two-way nature.

What Miller is doing here is not essentially condemning either end. He seems to be alerting the audience to the diametric opposition that governs the justice system, calling our attention to the elixir that Dr. Jekyll drinks to become Mr. Hyde when opportunity suits him. And now we have become smart to know that McCarthyism in whatever thinkable style: communism, republicanism, democratism, or any McDemo-communo-replicanism or vice versa will be like any of the corruptible, double-pointed human designs.

Major Themes of the Play

A crucible is a vessel in which metal is heated to a high temperature and melted for the purposes of casting. It can also refer, metaphorically, to a time in history when great political, social, and cultural changes are in force, where society is seemingly being melted down and recast into a new mold. The word is also remarkably similar to crucifixion, which Miller certainly intended in choosing it as the title of his play. The picture of a man and a society bubbling in a crucible and the crucifixion of Christ interweave to form the main themes of the play: the problem of making the right moral choice and the necessity of sacrifice as a means of redemption. Both these themes, of course, take place in the context of the larger struggle of good versus evil.

The choice John Proctor must make is between saving either himself or society. His failure to do well initially allows events to get out of hand and eventually forces him into a position where he must make a choice. Reverend Hale, while not subject to the same moral quandary as Proctor, also suffers a crisis of consciousness for his failure to strive hard enough to stop the proceedings of the court. In contrast to them both are Rebecca Nurse and Elizabeth Proctor, whose moral and emotional steadfastness represents society at its best.
In a society at odds with itself and where reason and faith in the society has been replaced with irrationality and self-doubt, a clever manipulator can cause chaos. The Reverend Parris, Danforth, Hathorne, and Putnam represent the corruption of society by self-interested parties preying on society's fears. Through them, Miller highlights the destruction that manipulation and weak-mindedness can thrust upon society.

Miller suggests that in such times good can only triumph through a sacrifice upon the altar of society, that the crisis might only be able to be rectified by the death of those who struggle to uphold society's values. The death of John Proctor, though it might seem a tragic waste, is necessary, both for his own personal redemption and that of his society. The sacrifice of Proctor, Rebecca Nurse, Giles Corey and others, recalls the sacrifice of Christ for the sake of humankind. In the end, The Crucible focuses on a historical event to drive home issues that essentially characterize all societies at all times, which makes the play both universal and enduring.

**The Individual Vs Authority**

Miller's concept of the parallel between 1950s America and seventeenth-century Salem emerges most clearly in the Themes of his plays. In both cases, Government assumed the right to control citizens' beliefs as well as their actions; in both, the consequences were the same.

The reality of Communism and the generally accepted non-reality of witchcraft are beside the point. In The Crucible, John and Rebecca are not standing up for individual rights in the modern sense. Salem villagers all believe in witches and infallibility of the Bible. What the victims oppose is the abuse of power. This is relevant to any age or culture. In late seventeenth-century New England, the balance began to turn to greater individual freedom. This did not please the rulers.

Until the eighteenth century, religion played a large part in the running of most European states or colonies. In particular, those affected by the protestant Reformation conformed to some form of theocratic (god-ruled) system. Laws were based on the authority of the Bible, and the Church used them to control every aspect of people's lives. The modern idea that religious belief is a matter of private conscience would have been considered blasphemous. Nevertheless, even in seventeenth-century New England, a more tolerant and diversified society was emerging. This movement towards change stirred up great social tensions.

The Reformation had made people more responsible for their own salvation. It substituted public disapproval for the penances of the Catholic Church. Yet the wealthier frequently escaped punishment.

In Act I, 'I have trouble enough... He says there's a party' John Proctor shows his resentment when Parris criticizes his infrequent church attendance. He is absent for practical reasons—Elizabeth's illness, his own work, and no doubt the ten-mile walk. He
feels Parris does not deserve respect. Rebecca, more obedient, knows that Parris is unworthy, but is still shocked by John’s remarks. Reverend Hale later reprimands him for daring to question Parris’s God-given authority.

Act II demonstrates the helplessness of people who try to stand up for their rights in a theocratic state. Once the witch-hunt has started, the potential for conflict escalates. Anyone who doubts the so-called evidence is questioning God’s will. The judges’ handling of the trial relates more to corruption of justice. They cling so inflexibly to their point of view that law-abiding characters like Rebecca and Francis Nurse are pushed into defiance. Even Hale, an establishment figure, finds he is unable to ignore his conscience. He finally denounces the court. Those whose honesty is stronger than their fear of death inevitably destroy themselves. Rebecca refuses to damn her soul with a lie; Giles values his land more than his life, and willingly accepts a horrible death.

The Effects of Fear

Fear is a dominant emotion in The Crucible. Mr. Parris is afraid that his rebellious Parishioners will use Betty’s strange illness to oust him from his position; Abigail fears that Reverend Hale will find out what she did in the forest; so she embarks on an elaborate hoax that almost destroys the village. Ashamed to confess his affair with Abigail, John Proctor speaks up too late. This is only to say that the villagers of Salem are like people everywhere - they have secrets to hide and worry about their reputations.

The unique feature that drew Miller to Salem was the fear that erupted there in 1692. Puritans believed that the Devil was constantly working to tempt human beings away from God. At the end of the play, Tituba is waiting for Satan to transport her to the singin’ and dancin’ in Barbados. All other references to witchcraft are connected with fear, suspicion, and the collapse of normal social values. The stricken community can no longer defend itself or protect vulnerable individuals.

There are two types of accusation in the play. The first comes from characters seeking revenge or exploiting the panic for personal gain. Others pass on the blame for their misfortunes, but they are not necessarily malicious. Irrational fear deludes them into believing whatever they are told. (No one ever stops to ask why Rebecca should want to harm Mrs. Putnam’s babies.)

In both the McCarthy trials and the Salem witch-hunt victims could escape punishment if they denounced others. Supplying names would of course imply that the accused were guilty themselves. In both episodes, only the strongest stood up to their judges. In his autobiography, Time bends, Miller describes his reaction to friends who were called up before the McCarthy tribunal and saved themselves by denouncing others. Similarly, in The Crucible, we meet characters that confess to practising witchcraft and accuse others of doing the same. This is the second type of accusation.
Tituba is the first to be interrogated. Mr. Putnam’s threat of hanging produces the desired answer, and thereafter the demoralized slave repeats any names suggested to her. Miller builds a prolonged scene around this minor character to show exactly how the prosecutors went about their business. Tituba represents all that were terrified into naming the 'witches'.

The pressures of irrational fear are most vividly illustrated in their effects on Mary Warren. Mary is terrified from the moment she steps inside the court, but she bears up well under cross-examination; Encouraged by Proctor, she refuses to withdraw her claim that the girls are fraudulent even when bullied by judge Hathorne. Yet she begins to crumple as soon as Abigail sets the girls loose on her within minutes, Mary is caught up in their hysteria and she disintegrates. In her final moments on stage, she rushes for protection to the very person responsible for her ordeal.

**Integrity**

John Proctor's progress to self-awareness represents a major theme running throughout Miller's work. Miller wrote: I understand the symbolic meaning of a character and his career to consist of the kind of commitment he makes to life or refuses to make (Introduction to Collected Plays). In Miller's thinking, moral honesty cannot be separated from a commitment to society.

In Act 4, the hero cries out, 'God in Heaven, what is John Proctor?' He finds his answer during his final moments on earth. As in several other Miller plays, the central figure must come to terms with the consequences of past actions. In The Crucible's opening scenes, Proctor takes little interest in the outbreak of hysteria at Salem. He is a busy farmer living five miles from the meeting house, and his irritation with Parris has kept him away from church services. Perhaps we should also give him credit for trying to keep away from Abigail, even if his efforts are not successful.

We see him next in his domestic surroundings, ashamed of his adultery, but also resentful that his wife will not accept his sincere repentance. His refusal to meddle in village affairs follows from a very natural reluctance to publicize his adultery. (It later turns out that at least one of Abigail's friends knows about it.) At this stage, John's practical reasons for standing aloof also give him a pretext for evading social responsibility. When the witch-hunters invade his home and arrest his wife, he is forced to become involved. In the court scenes, John rises above his own fears and resentment to argue as well as he can for common sense and reason. We see his growing social involvement when he turns down the chance to save Elizabeth by abandoning his friends and their wives. Yet his plan of action still depends on making someone else take responsibility - Mary Warren. Only when this hope collapses does he tell the full truth, regardless of consequences.

Act 4 concentrates almost wholly on this current theme. John faces a final temptation to retreat into dishonesty and save his life. His newfound closeness with Elizabeth increases
his agony. At first he uses his own guilt to escape the gallows, but under Danforth’s relentless pressure he arrives at a clear view of what his choice must be. He manages to accept and forgive his own imperfections. Discovering his ‘core’ and identity, John can at last take charge of his life, neither rejecting social involvement nor handing over his conscience to someone else.

Irony is often used in The Crucible to emphasize the irrationality of the witch-hunt. That John Proctor's life-affirming choice should lead to death is the greatest irony of the play.

Two other characters, Reverend Hale and Elizabeth, take a similar path to self-awareness. Elizabeth perceives that her own physical coldness was partly responsible for the affair between Abigail and her husband. However, this is a dramatic device to allow John Proctor to come to terms with himself. We have no clue as to how Elizabeth will deal with her knowledge after John’s death.

In the final Act, Hale is full of remorse for supporting the witch-hunt. Preaching a doctrine that is the exact opposite of his former beliefs, he urges the prisoners to lie in order to save themselves. This desperate attempt to appease his conscience brings him no comfort. He is a man broken by guilt; there is no indication that he will ever recover.

**Mass Hysteria**

Mass hysteria does not have to involve hysterical behaviour in the ordinary sense. The phrase describes what happens when the same strong emotion grips a large group of people. Most of us have experienced it in milder forms. When we cheer on our favourite team, or go 'clubbing', feeling part of the crowd intensifies our emotion. This can apply to any situation, even when people are not physically assembled in the same place.

There is another side to the phenomenon. When fear and prejudice spread through a community, they become self-reinforcing and their effect on individuals is enormously magnified. In The Crucible, the behaviour of both adolescents and adults is a powerful demonstration of this reality. Everything happens against a background of ongoing quarrels that have never been spilled. In Act 1, several random circumstances combine to provoke the disaster. The girls' reaction when their expedition to the forest is found out leads to the suspicion of witchcraft; Mr. Hale is eager to try out his skills; Mrs. Putnam has never stopped grieving for her dead babies, and uses the crisis to find a scapegoat.

By the end of Act 1, the adults have succumbed to their fear that the Devil and his witches are trying to destroy Salem. The only two strong enough to resist - Rebecca and John Proctor -have left the stage. This is the first of the play’s biting ironies: the true model of Satanic possession is not the innocent victims, but the accusers (and later, the judges), who hand themselves over to the little crazy children.
Once the hysteria is established, it triggers almost every incident in the play. Through the Proctors’ servant, Mary Warren, it invades the quiet domesticity of their home. Tragically, the quarrel between John and Elizabeth has a direct effect on their ability to resist. Their dispute prevents John from taking steps that might have changed the course of events.

We know that common sense has lost when we hear about the arrest of so widely respected a person as Rebecca Nurse. The girls’ unpredictable behaviour is both a symbol of the hysteria infecting society and a dramatization of that hysteria in action. So, too, is the gullibility of adults who swallow the girls’ accusations. Notice how skilfully Miller leads up to his two scenes of ‘possession’, the first engineered by Abigail to save her own skin, and the second a full-blown demonstration of mass hysteria in action.

At the end of Act 1, we see Abigail whipping Betty Parris into a state of hysteria as she begins a campaign to save her own skin and, later, to destroy Elizabeth Proctor. In Act 2 we hear about the girls’ increasing power, but only through description. Wherever Abigail walks, the crowd would part like the sea for Israel, and if her followers scream and howl and (all to the floor - the person's clapped in the jail for bewitchin' them. At some point - Miller does not say when - the girls' fraud takes them over and they can no longer help their behaviour. The playwright skilfully holds back the second scene of possession until the moment of maximum impact - the terrifying climax to Act 3.

There have been several attempts to explain the behaviour of the girls at Salem. One theory relates it to Sigmund Freud’s work on clinical hysteria. Freud concluded that buried emotions were responsible for symptoms in his patients that appeared to have no physical cause. What he described came very close to what happened at Salem. The symptoms were catching; and Freud’s patients were often in a state of ‘dual consciousness’. They knew what was happening to them, but had virtually no control over themselves.

Miller leaves open the question of how many girls were similarly affected and when this happened. Abigail alone knows exactly what she is doing; she controls the court officials as tightly as she controls her followers. She is confident enough to threaten Judge Danforth, the Deputy-Governor. Danforth thunders at Mary, ‘You will confess yourself or you will hang’, but Abigail instinctively moves on to something far more sinister. Mary ceases to exist in human form when Abigail ‘sees’ her in the yellow bird perched on a roof beam. Psychological torture works by alienating victims from their own identity. In the horrifying climax, Abigail hypnotizes the girls into a single mass consciousness, and uses them to destroy Mary’s personality and will-power.

**The Corruption of Justice**

It is hard for anyone today to regard a trial for witchcraft as anything other than a mockery of justice. To pick out what goes wrong in The Crucible we have to put aside disbelief and look at the details of charging, arrest and trial.
Reverend Hale discovers the first 'witch' - Tituba - without any judicial enquiry at all. The first barrier against an unbiased examination of evidence is the close association of Church and State. Those who interpret God's laws do not imagine themselves capable of human error. As a clergyman in a theocratic society, Mr. Hale is allowed to speak on behalf of the state, although he has no legal training. It is through him that Abigail and her followers become linked to the court as official witch-finders. 'The entire contention of the state ... is that the voice of Heaven is speaking through the children', Danforth tells Proctor. Yet the haphazard nature of the accusations leaves them wide open to abuse by people like Thomas Putnam.

The process of arrest is chaotic as well as brutal, as we see when Cheever and Herrick arrive at the Proctors' farmhouse to take Elizabeth to jail. Cheever will not tell her why he is looking for 'puppets'. During the trials, Danforth manipulates both defendants and legal procedure to suit his purpose. He never attempts to look at probabilities, or weigh the defendants' motives. Despite his authority and experience, he presides over an unruly court. He allows Hathorne to score points based on sheer verbal trickery - 'How do you know, then, that you are not a witch?' Danforth does the same himself when he entraps Elizabeth into lying to save her husband's reputation. He also uses leading questions to get the answers that suit him (though not always successfully):

'Might it be that here we have no afflicting spirit loose; but in the court there were some?'

'You deny every scrap and tittles of this?'

'You have seen the Devil, have you not?'

The greatest injustice in the whole conduct of the witch trials is that the inquisitors offer a reprieve to those that confess, provided they name other suspects. Proctor points out the obvious consequences to Hale, but the minister refuses to face the truth. So the witch-hunt swells to an enormous size and infects other parts of the province. The nightmare only ends when the whole community is on the brink of revolt.

**Conformity, Imbalance of Power, And Social Injustice**

Conformity has plagued mankind for ages. It is a strong theme in The Crucible, and Miller's audience can draw parallels to it in their own lives. In The Crucible, the need to conform to the church's views and that of its minister is quite evident. The characters in the play find themselves in a very difficult situation. They must either turn their backs on what they believe in or lie by admitting to having had "relations with the devil", thereby conforming with the church's wishes, or they must follow their individualistic beliefs and refuse to lie. The Crucible should be considered a great drama just because of its all-encompassing theme of conformity.
The Crucible has so much more to it that it needn't be considered great drama on the basis of a good theme alone. It also attacks the poor balance of power that we can see around us every day. Miller shows us how much power a sole individual can have when that person defines the ideologies or beliefs by which we live. During the Salem Witch Trials religion was, much more so than now, the answer to what people didn't understand. So as a result, ministers and priests were extremely powerful because they were the only people that were "qualified" to interpret the rules of their religion. They were considered to be the voice of God. Back in Salem, how could anything have been more powerful than that? Nobody could question the priests because they would then be questioning God. Which of course was completely taboo. So a person in such a position of power could say nearly anything they wanted, such as deciding that "cleansing" was needed in Salem. And, as a result, people would listen and it would be done, but not necessarily deemed to be right.

In the 1950's the idea of an imbalance of power was still an issue. After just starting to recover from the Holocaust, which was fueled by the very same need for "cleansing" as in Salem but on a larger scale, Americans were bewildered as to how easily people could be manipulated by those in a position of great power. Hitler had just basically accused a few million people of being witches. Americans could see how weak they were. One could not question the government, the military, or the church. To this very day, a huge amount of people are still afraid of questioning the church - look at the issue of abortion and the Catholic Church's position upon it for example.

Miller portrayed the priests and judges in The Crucible as that certain type of people that Americans will always be up against in the struggle for power. While the Church and its ministers isn't quite as powerful now because people can openly admit having no belief in God without fear of being hung, we now have a new group of people that decide what is true and what is not. Science is the new religion and scientists the new priests. Scientists are the only people capable of interpreting what all of the math and formulas mean. And as a result, the rest of us openly accept their conclusions to be the true. This is the same kind of reliance that people put on the church two hundred years ago. And at that time, you didn't question it. The church was always right. The Crucible is a great drama because it addresses the issue of conformity in American culture and questions the amount of power that we allow those to have whom are supposedly more educated than the majority of the population and are responsible for defining the ideologies and beliefs by which we live.

At the time when The Crucible was first being performed something was taking place that was very alike the Salem Witch Trials. In Hollywood, the House Un-American Activities Committee was investigating the film industry for communist activities. Actors, writers, and directors were interrogated as to whether or not they had involved themselves in any kind of relations with the Communist Party. If people didn't readily conform to the HUAC's line of questioning, and answer their questions regardless of whether or not they were deemed intrusive or not, it was assumed that they had been involved with the Communist Party. It was thought that the Communists were trying to
gain control of the American film industry for propaganda purposes. As a result, those individuals that were thought to be in any way associated with the Communists were blacklisted in Hollywood and could no longer work there.

As history has shown us, the injustices that occurred during the Salem Witch Trials continue to go on. Most obviously by the HUAC in America at the time of Miller's The Crucible. We see parallels between the Salem Witch Trials and other issues even today. Most recently, the military wanted to discharge any gay men in service. These kinds of injustices will always exist. The Crucible addresses the idea of a group of select people choosing another group for a scapegoat to a supposedly determined "problem" that exists. This is yet another reason why The Crucible should be considered to be great drama.

Arthur Miller's, The Crucible, addressed issues which were as important to Americans in the 1950's as they are today. The idea of conformity is one which any given individual will always face. People who define the ideologies and beliefs by which we live will also always exist. As will the accusations made by one group of select individuals towards groups of others in order to support their cause, or solve their problem. The House Un-American Activities Committee was doing exactly that in the 1950's which was why the idea of "cleansing" in The Crucible was so relevant to Americans. Arthur Miller's play took on very strong themes and took a stand against issues that are still pertinent to date. Great drama is something in which an audience can find relevance and relation. Great drama is drama that will always be important. The Crucible is a play that no one will ever be able to ignore because of Miller's ability to touch issues and themes that have plagued mankind throughout history and will continue to do so in the future.

The Crucible – The Title

Arthur Miller cleverly picked the title "The Crucible" for his play about the Salem witch hunts of the 1660's because of the word's many meanings. Throughout the play, Miller has characters face severe tests that make them question their own self. A crucible is also an earthen pot that is used for melting metals. In a way the town of Salem was a crucible as people were brought before the court and blasted with allegations from others as being witches. They were either forced to give in and live a lie or be hanged.

The term crucible could also be used to describe the heat of the situation. Innocent people were caught up in the witch hunt were thrown into an overheated situation that had been blown completely out of proportion. The crucible may also symbolize Hell. As substances in a crucible melt and disintegrate they form a completely different substance. This could symbolize the society of Salem disintegrating and forming into a completely new one. After the situation had been heated what you are left with are the remnants of society that once existed.

By the end of this play, the true meaning of the word crucible was a severe test. John Proctor underwent the most severe test and as a result his character underwent a drastic
change throughout the play. The ultimate test that John Proctor undergoes is the final decision that he makes before he dies. The town of Salem was deeply religious and they were willing to believe the word of a deceitful young girl rather than believe in the integrity of people like John Proctor, Reverend Hale, and Rebecca Nurse.

Throughout the play John Proctor was an honest man, as was his wife, Elizabeth until she was asked to testify against her husband about his affair. One thing that never changed about Proctor throughout the whole play was his willingness to stand for his beliefs. Time after time, he was bombarded with questions about why he didn't regularly attend church or why he didn't have one of his sons baptized. He answered these questions with integrity and questioned the ministry of Parris. No one in the town of Salem had done that before.

Proctor was also undergoing a difficult time in his marriage with Elizabeth and at the beginning he seemed timid to deal with it. The first time that Elizabeth and John are in a scene together the mood is extremely awkward. There is hardly any eye contact or communication between the two. This had been going on for seven months, since Proctor's affair with Abigail Williams.

By the end of the play, the soreness of the subject seemed to disappear and any timidness that Proctor felt also disappeared. In the final two scenes, John Proctor was willing to ruin his name by stating that he did in fact have an affair with Abigail in order to prove the accusers wrong. Before this time, Proctor would not even discuss the issue especially when Abigail approached him in the first scene about it. Abigail claimed that she thought about him and that one night she had with him constantly. Proctor would not reply and wanted nothing to do with the conversation. Proctor wanted to wish that whole night away, as if never happened. He even said that was ashamed of his act. When it came to restoring credibility to the people accused by Abigail he was willing to set aside his personal problems and admit to his adultery.

The ultimate test came at the end when Proctor must decide between confessing and living or dying alongside the wrongly accused people of Salem. He chose the latter, but I do not think the Proctor from Act I would have done this. The Salem Witch Trials changed the man drastically as he appeared to be a stubborn man in the beginning. By the end, Proctor chose to die in the most righteous way, with dignity. In the beginning, Proctor could be described as stubborn and selfish, but by the end of he was anything but these qualities. He was willing to die alongside those that were accused and he refused to take the easy way out the situation by confessing to something he never did. Proctor and the others were unwilling to confess. Instead they stood for the principles of honesty and integrity in order to die noble deaths.

"The Crucible" was a good name for this play because of its originality and how its various meanings seemingly fit into the plot and the various sub-plots of the play. Salem was the perfect setting for the "the Crucible" as the settlers had no place to turn away from the heat, the mayhem, and the severe tests that faced them in the town. The heat
of the situation forced the change of John Proctor and the town was forever changed as a result of the trials and the false the accusations.

**Symbolic importance of the Title**

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**McCarthyism and “The Crucible”**

After World War II, America and Russia began to view one another uneasily. The two countries were based on opposing ideologies, namely capitalism and communism. In addition, each country was rapidly expanding its political influence throughout Europe and the Third World. In 1947, the Cold War began, and the two powers began to treat one another as deadly enemies. In America, anyone who had ever flirted with socialist or communist beliefs was suddenly seen as a traitor to the American way of life.

Although the persecution of leftists took its name from the McCarthy hearings of the early 1950s, it actually began with the publication of the Attorney-General’s List in 1947 by the House Committee of Un-American Activities (HUAC). This list con-tained names of people with ties to subversive or communist organizations. Later, this list expanded to become the notorious Black List, by which thousands of people were forbidden to work in their professions. In addition, HUAC held hearings to investigate charges of "Un-Americanism.” These hearings con-tinued through the McCarthy era and were often more damag-ing than the McCarthy hearings themselves.

In 1950, the Chinese Revolution had just been won, the Russians had exploded their first atomic bomb and the Korean War had just begun. The time was ripe for an explosion of
anti-communist feeling. Overnight, Senator Joseph McCarthy became famous with his accusation that, for 20 years, the Democratic government had been nurturing the growth of communism in America. Under McCarthy, Senate hearings were set up and the wholesale persecution of leftists began.

It should be remembered that during the Spanish Civil War and World War II, many people had worked with socialists and leftists to fight fascism. Indeed, only a few years before, America and Russia had been allies. Under McCarthyism, however, anti-communist hysteria became so intense and so irrational that even moderate liberals referred to it as a witch hunt. As Miller states in his notes to The Crucible, “in America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of alliance with the Red hell—a political policy is equated with moral right, and opposition to it with diabolical malevolence.”

The McCarthy and HUAC hearings followed a similar pattern. As each “witness” took the stand, he would be asked whether he had ever had any dealings with communists. If he refused to answer, he could be arrested. If he denied the charge, he would be asked to prove his innocence by giving the names of those who did have communist connections. If he confessed to having once attended a leftist meeting or contributed to a leftist cause, then he was asked to show that he had reformed by naming others who had attended that meeting or worked for that cause. Those who were named were then called to the hearings as new witnesses.

Unfortunately, few witnesses had the courage to stand up to the McCarthy and HUAC committees. Most willingly gave the names of friends and colleagues who had at some time been associated with leftist causes. If they didn’t know any names, they often repeated rumors or simply lied. And, as one critic commented in disgust, “they lied, not to save their lives, but to save their swimming pools.”

The McCarthy hearings particularly focused on the arts in America. Between 1950 and 1954, several artists and intellectuals were imprisoned for refusing to testify, including Dashiell Hammett and the famous “Hollywood Ten.” In addition, thousands of writers, musicians, actors and directors were “blacklisted” and forbidden to work. Some left the country, others changed professions, and still others changed their names. Some resumed their careers when the blacklist was lifted in the 1960s, but for most the damage was permanent.

Eventually, McCarthy’s power collapsed under its own weight. As the government and the arts were purged over and over, the old lists became tired and worn. McCarthy became wilder and wilder in his accusations, claiming that the American army had become disloyal and that powerful generals were traitors. The public became increasingly skeptical of McCarthy’s charges and began to press for the truth. Public opposition increased as a number of well-known witnesses, including Arthur Miller, challenged the authority of the HUAC and McCarthy hearings.
The Crucible was first performed in January of 1953. It must have seemed like a slap in the face to McCarthy by a leading American playwright. McCarthyism had been called a witch hunt, and here was a play about the real witch hunt. Parallels between the Salem court and the McCarthy and HUAC hearings were clearly drawn.

During the hearings, as in Salem, due process of law was abandoned and hysteria was spread through lies and rumors. Witnesses were trapped into dishonest confessions and forced to falsely accuse their friends and neighbors. Those who opposed the hearings were accused of working for the Red devil, rather than simply the Devil, as in Salem. In Washington, as in Salem, many innocent people suffered. As Miller says of the victims of the witch hunt, “one can only pity them all, just as we will be pitied someday.”

Today, the Salem witch hunt is far behind us and the McCarthy era too is history. Nonetheless, The Crucible still has political meaning for our time. In his notes to The Crucible, Miller points out that “the balance has yet to be struck between order and freedom.” Every age and every society has its repres-sions. In the past few years, members of the "Moral Majority" have increasingly tried to limit various freedoms in the United States. Quite possibly, Americans will soon have to choose once more between authority of the state and freedom of the indiv-idual.

The Crucible’s themes, then, are timeless. As long as governments continue to distort the truth, individuals with courage and integrity will continue to challenge them. The choice between freedom and repression is always with us.

**The Crucible - Weakness, Jealousy, and Manipulation**

In every conflict there always seems to be at least one person to blame. In The Crucible by Arthur Miller, many problems arise that deal with live and death. Many innocent people in this play were hanged during the Salem Witch Trials. Of course, there are many people that may be blamed. In The Crucible, one may find Abigail Williams, The Putnams, and Mary Warren to blame. Abigail was manipulative, The Putnams were very jealous, and Mary Warren was weak-willed.

Although she was a smart girl, Abigail was only out for herself and her own reputation. Abigail Williams didn't only lie about witchcraft, but she forced others to join in. She was Reverend Parris's niece and believed she could get away with whatever she wanted. Abigail did not want to have to damage her reputation by having a different testimony as all the other girls, so she forced them to lie as well. While alone with the girls she said, "Let either of you breathe a word, or the edge of a word about the other things, and I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you. And you know I can do it..." (Miller 1044). Abigail also stuck a needle in herself because she knew Goody Proctor had a poppet at her home with a needle in it. While talking to John Proctor about Abigail, Cheever remarked, "...and, stuck two inches in the flesh of her belly, she draw a needle out. And demandin' of her how she come to be so stabbed, she testify it were your wife's familiar spirit pushed it
in," (Miller 1077). Abigail may have been the most prominent person to lay the blame on, but other people were guilty as well.

Jealousy also played a big role in who was to blame for the deaths in Salem. The Putnams were a small family, whose seven children out of eight did not survive. Mrs. Putnam was a very jealous person when it came to families, and Mr. Putnam was a very jealous person when it came to land. Goody Putnam wanted more children and was jealous of Rebecca Nurse and her large family, so she blamed her for witchcraft. Mr. Putnam wanted more and more land and was very greedy. He accused many people of witchcraft, and once they were hanged, he would buy their land. Mental weakness is as much to blame for these deaths as much as jealousy and manipulation.

Some people may have good intentions, but still cause harm by the things they do. Mary Warren was the servant for the Proctors. In her case, sewing a poppet for Elizabeth Proctor caused a lot of problems for her. During the trials, Mary sewed a poppet to give to Elizabeth as a gift. However innocent it was, it still was the underlying reason that she got accused of witchcraft. Also, during the trials Mary didn't want to tell the judge that all the girls were lying, even though she did tell Proctor. She made him look bad by lying and saying, "My name, he want my name. ‘I'll murder you,’ he says, ‘if my wife hangs! We must go and overthrow the court,’ he says!" (Miller 1102). Proctor was so aggravated by this that he said some things about God that he shouldn't have, and there was no tolerance for that in Salem.

The people in this play may have had different motives for accusing other people, and practically sentencing them to death, but the outcome of all the accusations were basically the same. Innocent people died and there was more than one person to lay the blame on. In almost every conflict there is someone, or some people, to blame. In this case, it was Abigail, the Putnams, and Mary Warren.

**The Witch-Hunting and Historical Scenes in the Time of “The Crucible”**

“The Crucible” is a political play pertaining to the backdrop midst of twentieth century in general history of the world. In 1951, America was passing through difficult circumstances. After the 2nd World War Communism was having its impact on the world. Most of the countries and nations were becoming communist e.g. Korea, Vietnam and Algeria. Capitalism was in its defence.

There was a rivalry in nuclear fields and conquering to star world. Russia was in escort in this respect. Russia first sent Spuntink-1, China was expanding but America was trying to stop China. There was a cold war in Loascom. It was not an open armed conflict between U.S.A and Union of Soviet. State of Republic, both super power U.S.A and U.S.S.R were trying to destroy each other though in cold manners. America wanted to
check the growing interest of communists. Intellectuals of the world started to appreciate the communism e.g. B. Russell.

Early kings of the Russia were called “Czar”. In their period, they occupied many territories of Iran. But when Communism dominated Russia, they returned these areas. This thing brought Muslims in favour of communism. There started a great movement of “Islamic Socialism”. There is no difference between Islam and Socialism. Both want equality.

In 1936, in Spain, came the Government of France, as the leaders of Fascists. They were against communism. So he started to crush communists in Spain. Intellectuals from the entire world started together in Spain to participate in war. There was a war between rightist and leftist. America and Britain support France to stop communism.

Under American instructions, there started Islamic movements from Turkey to Indonesia and they say that communists are heathen and are not like Muslims. So most of Islamic movements are the creation of them. Mujahedeen were produced in order to encounter the communists. In this way the influence of communism was tried to break. In this regard there started the search of communists in America and the whole world.

American feels that communist had entered in their Government. In the area from Turkey to Indonesia, communists were banned by America and Islamic religious parties were brought to front. U.S, Senate created a committee called Un American Activities Committee. They arrested everyone whom they suspected to be communist by declaring them witches. This was called witch hunting. There was no way for agents of communism. They either, punished them or put into prisons or sent into madhouses. If one wanted to escape from the charge of communism. There is only one way, to name other one. Many were killed, many went underworld, and many committed suicide. Everyone felt unsafe

Miller, the great artist, wrote his play in this context. He found an artistic way of bringing up the political issue in aesthetic style. He picked up, from the history of U.S.A, a well-known case of witch hunting in seventeenth century in a town of Salem. He wrote about the incidents of the seventeenth century. There were rumours that witches were in this town and they picked up children. People started to use these rumours for their personal interest. The play was very successive but the reference to 19th century witch hunting was too obvious. The chairman of Un American Activities Committee was Senator Joseph McCarthy investigated particularly university teachers, trade unionists and artists of all kinds. That’s why Miller was restricted to go to foreign countries.

Arthur Miller’s play, The Crucible, is based upon actual events in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. Some facts, as Miller admits in the introduction, have been changed. Abigail, for instance was only 11 at the time of the trials and John Proctor was 60. An affair between the two of them is a somewhat far-fetched idea. Betty Parris, who was six at the time,
became strangely ill sometime after February 1692. She complained of a fever and crashed about the house in pain.

There is much speculation about the actual cause of her symptoms. A man named Cotton Mather had recently published a book called Memorable Providences describing the suspected witchcraft of a woman in Boston. Betty’s behaviour in many ways mirrored that described in the book. Closer attention was paid when Abigail Williams, eleven-year-old Ann Putnam Jr. (called Ruth in Miller's play), seventeen-year-old Mercy Lewis and Mary Walcott (Susanna) began to exhibit similar symptoms. When Dr. Griggs could not cure the children, he naturally suggested that some supernatural force must be at work. An increasingly larger group, which also grew to include adults, began to complain of afflictions. Sometime after February 25, Betty and Abigail named their tormentors with such consistent stories that it seems that the girls must have been working their stories out together. The first people to be accused of witchcraft (Tituba, Sarah Osborn, and Sarah Good) were outsiders.

It was easy for the pious townspeople to believe that those who differed from them were influenced by the devil. The antics in the court proceedings went much as Miller portrayed. Displays of the victim’s apparent affliction when in the presence of the witch were considered valid evidence of guilt. The fervour may have died down at that point but Tituba, who had been adamantly denying involvement in witchcraft, proclaimed that she had been approached by a tall man who asked her to sign his book. She stated that she and four others, including Sarah Good and Sarah Osborn, were in fact witches and flew through the air on poles. At this point, the witch hunting took off. Even the four-year old daughter of Sarah Good, Dorcas, was accused and jailed. Bridget Bishop, the sixty-year-old owner of a house of ill repute was the first brought to trial. She was the most likely of the prisoners to be convicted considering her deviant behaviour (in terms of the standards at the time). After her conviction however, one of the judges, Saltonstall, resigned in disgust. (It is interesting to know that the author Nathaniel Hawthorne was a descendant of Judge Hawthorne. That was added to distinguish future generations from the shameful actions of the Salem judge.) Bridget Bishop was hanged on June 10, 1692.

As time went on the accused were not as disreputable as Bishop. Rebecca Nurse was actually found not guilty but Chief Justice Stoughton urged the jury to reconsider and she was condemned. John Proctor was actually a tavern owner (not a farmer as in the play) and was openly critical of the witch-hunts. He was an example of what would happen to those who spoke out against the proceedings. Proctor was hanged August 19, 1692. Doubt in the validity of the accusations finally began when the Ex-Reverend George Burroughs was hung. He recited the Lord’s Prayer perfectly, which was thought impossible for one in league with the Devil. Cotton Mather, the author, was in attendance that day and it was his intervention that brought the people back to supporting the trials.
After all, an innocent person would not be convicted. Giles Corey was as the play reports, pressed to death for refusing to enter a plea to the charge of witchcraft against him. His wife Martha was hanged three days later with 7 other convicted witches. Her group would be the last to die. Salem was regaining its senses. Reverend John Hale and the villagers found it increasingly harder to believe that so many respectable people would turn to the Devil all at once. Increase Mather, the father of Cotton, began to argue against the use of spectral evidence (Cotton had been a strong force in allowing its use). Without spectral evidence, most of the remaining trials ended in acquittals. Reverend Parris was replaced though he tried to blame those around him. Many of those involved also tried to place the blame on others. Those still in prison were released and in later years, the families of the executed were compensated. The people of Salem still remember the terrible events of their history. The Salem Witch Museum is an integral part of the town as is a stone wall with jutting slabs bearing the names of the dead.

When John Proctor is asked to recall his Ten Commandments (a witch could not), he forgets adultery just as he literally forgot when he chose to have an affair with Abigail.

Proctor calls Hale Pontius Pilate. Hale sees the injustice being done yet he is willing to go along with the will of the people (the court) in order to protect himself as the biblical figure allowed the crucifixion of Jesus. Hale is not acting in a just manner. By the time he changes his ways, it is too late for him to have any influence. If Hale is Pontius Pilate, the innocent victims of the tragedy are like Jesus. Christians believe that Jesus died to save future generations. Those who learn from the deaths in Salem are also saved. They are saved from repeating history and suffering another great loss of life.

"The Crucible" Presents the Real Characters from Real American Society

In a sense, The Crucible has the structure of a classical tragedy, with John Proctor as the play’s tragic hero. Honest, upright, and blunt-spoken, Proctor is a good man, but one with a secret, fatal flaw. His lust for Abigail Williams led to their affair (which occurs before the play begins), and created Abigail’s jealousy of his wife, Elizabeth, which sets the entire witch hysteria in motion.

Once the trials begin, Proctor realizes that he can stop Abigail’s rampage through Salem but only if he confesses to his adultery. Such an admission would ruin his good name, and Proctor is, above all, a proud man who places great emphasis on his reputation. He eventually makes an attempt, through Mary Warren’s testimony, to name Abigail as a fraud without revealing the crucial information. When this attempt fails, he finally bursts out with a confession, calling Abigail a “whore” and proclaiming his guilt publicly.

Only then does he realize that it is too late, that matters have gone too far, and that not even the truth can break the powerful frenzy that he has allowed Abigail to whip up. Proctor’s confession succeeds only in leading to his arrest and conviction as a witch, and
though he lambastes the court and its proceedings, he is also aware of his terrible role in allowing this fervour to grow unchecked.

Proctor redeems himself and provides a final denunciation of the witch trials in his final act. Offered the opportunity to make a public confession of his guilt and live, he almost succumbs, even signing a written confession. His immense pride and fear of public opinion compelled him to withhold his adultery from the court, but by the end of the play he is more concerned with his personal integrity than his public reputation. He, still, wants to save his name, but for personal and religious reasons rather than public reasons.

Proctor’s refusal to provide a false confession is a true religious and personal stand. Such a confession would dishonour his fellow prisoners, who are brave enough to die as testimony to the truth. Perhaps more relevantly, a false admission would also dishonour him, staining not just his public reputation, but also his soul. By refusing to give up his personal integrity Proctor implicitly proclaims his conviction that such integrity will bring him to heaven. He goes to the gallows redeemed for his earlier sins. As Elizabeth says to end the play, responding to Hale’s plea that she convince Proctor to publicly confess:

“He has his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!”

Of the major characters, Abigail is the least complex. She is clearly the villain of the play, more so than Parris or Danforth: she tells lies, manipulates her friends and the entire town, and eventually sends nineteen innocent people to their deaths. Throughout the hysteria, Abigail’s motivations never seem more complex than simple jealousy and a desire to have revenge on Elizabeth Proctor. The language of the play is almost Biblical, and Abigail seems like a Biblical character—a Jezebel figure, driven only by sexual desire and a lust for power. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out a few background details that, though they don’t mitigate Abigail’s guilt, make her actions more understandable.

Abigail is an orphan and an unmarried girl; she thus occupies a low rung on the Puritan Salem social ladder (the only people below her are the slaves, like Tituba, and social outcasts). For young girls in Salem, the minister and the other male adults are God’s earthly representatives, their authority derived from on high. The trials, then, in which the girls are allowed to act as though they have a direct connection to God, empower the previously powerless Abigail. Once shunned and scorned by the respectable townsfolk who had heard rumours of her affair with John Proctor, Abigail now finds that she has clout, and she takes full advantage of it. A mere accusation from one of Abigail’s troop is enough to incarcerate and convict even the well-respected inhabitant of Salem. Whereas others once reproached her for her adultery, she now has the opportunity to accuse them of the worst sin of all: devil-worship.

John Hale, the intellectual, naïve witch-hunter, enters the play in Act I when Parris summons him to examine his daughter, Betty. In an extended commentary on Hale in Act I, Miller describes him as “a tight-skinned, eager-eyed intellectual. This is a beloved
errand for him; on being called here to ascertain witchcraft he has felt the pride of the specialist whose unique knowledge has at last been publicly called for.” Hale enters in a flurry of activity, carrying large books and projecting an air of great knowledge. In the early going, he is the force behind the witch trials, probing for confessions and encouraging people to testify.

Over the course of the play, however, he experiences a transformation, one more remarkable than that of any other character. Listening to John Proctor and Mary Warren, he becomes convinced that they, not Abigail, are telling the truth. In the climactic scene in the court in Act III, he throws his lot in with those opposing the witch trials. In tragic fashion, his about-face comes too late—the trials are no longer in his hands but rather in those of Danforth and the theocracy, which has no interest in seeing its proceedings exposed as a sham.

The failure of his attempts to turn the tide renders the once-confident Hale a broken man. As his belief in witchcraft falters, so does his faith in the law. In Act IV, it is he who counsels the accused witches to lie, to confess their supposed sins in order to save their own lives. In his change of heart and subsequent despair, Hale gains the audience's sympathy but not its respect, since he lacks the moral fibre of Rebecca Nurse or, as it turns out, John Proctor. Although Hale recognizes the evil of the witch trials, his response is not defiance but surrender. He insists that survival is the highest good, even if it means accommodating oneself to injustice—something that the truly heroic characters can never accept.

“The Crucible” As a Modern Tragedy

“The crucible” is a modern tragedy written in the perspective of ahistorical incident of Salem’s witchcraft (17th century) but, the play highlights the vindictiveness of McCarthyism and Communists trails in America in 20th century.

The play contains almost all the elements of a modern tragedy. Though it is quite different from other tragedies as it brings forth a story of historical importance, yet the protagonist of the play, John Proctor, shares a lot with a modern man. Miller has blended intellectual, social, moral and psychological problems of a modern man in the character of Proctor.

There are many arguments whether this play is a tragedy or not. The left hand critics declare “The Crucible” is not a tragedy as it does not fulfil all the conditions set by Aristotle, that the protagonist should be a royal birth and the centre of attention of everyone as it is common in the plays of Sophocles and Shakespeare to be able to arouse the feelings of pity and fear associated to a tragedy. But this accusation does not hold much strength, as in the world of today kings and princes are not present with similar pomp and show. So, the presentation of a royal figure would be unrealistic and fictitious.
Moreover, modern man is not confronted with supernatural elements like the heroes of classical plays. Rather today man is at war with society to have a dignified and a respectable position in it. Now everyman is a centre of his own attention. The basic problem of modern man is to determine his place in his surroundings. So, the concept of tragedy should be changed according to the requirements of time and age. Thus, a modern tragedy is a tragedy of a layman because a modern man is a layman. So, modern tragedy is a tragedy of everyman.

Arthur Miller stands head and shoulders above the modern American dramatists. He keenly observes the conflict between the aims and objectives of an individual and his social surroundings, and beautifully presents these conflicts in his plays. In this play he presents the image of a “guilt-ridden man”

John Proctor is a common countryman, a farmer by profession. He is respected for his uprightness and fear for his sharp dealing with hypocrites. The writer says that in his presence “A fool felt his foolishness instantly”. But Proctor also holds guilt on his name. He has been sexually involved with a girl, Abigail. Proctor is deeply repentant on his sin of adultery and on betraying his wife, Elizabeth. He cannot come out of this guilt till the end and feels that his salvation is not possible and that he cannot climb up the altar steps with the dignity of righteous people. Consider his statement to Elizabeth:

“Let them that never lie, die now to keep their souls. It is a pretence for me, a vanity that will not blind God nor keep my children out of the wind”.

But he reaches a dignified position through proper decision in the end. Thus the attention of the playwright is on the moral choice of Proctor. Though he is a sinner, yet he is a man of good conscience.

It is also to be noted that in Miller’s plays, the catastrophe rises from some sexual sin. In fact, he wants to enhance the importance of family life, if the rules of marriage are not abided by the downfall in sure to come in one or the other way. Miller says:

“I cannot live apart from society”.

He thinks that moral honesty cannot be separated from a commitment to the society. Though a man and the environment do not merely interact, yet they are the part of each other “a fish is in water and the water is in fish”. Miller implies this dictum to every human being and proves it through his protagonist that every person has to live in harmony with his surroundings.

Proctor has been presented as a rebel of society. He leads a life of isolation – partly because of his shame and partly of his stubborn manner and this isolation and inactivity becomes his flaw. At first, Proctor denies the importance of society stays away from the trails of witch hunt and even during his trial takes selfish decision to save his life. But later, he has to accept that he is nothing without his surroundings. He realizes what he
owes to his neighbours. He knows that his acceptance of being a witch would greatly demoralize the people and they would not fight against this brutal act.

“I blacken all of them when this (my confession) is nailed to the church the very day they hang for silence”.

Miller presents self-discovery of his protagonist within all the action of the play. The self-quest of Proctor begins when Elizabeth repeatedly pleads him to judge him. He has lost faith in his goodness and needs some outer action to invoke him to a certain decision. But Elizabeth pushes him to take his decision and then he asks for divine help and cries out:

“God in Heaven! What is John Proctor?”

And soon he gets the answer. In the final moments of his life, he realizes that he has not yet lost tall of his virtue, for at least he knows his responsibility towards his neighbours. He utters:

“I do think I see shred of goodness in John Proctor”.

On a broader level, “The Crucible”, is also a social tragedy. Miller describes now innocent people are mercilessly convicted and murdered only to save an ideology. By the time of the settings of the play, Puritan’s church and government is losing control over individuals. This is because of the corruption of priests, presented by Parris in the play. The weirdly vanity and hellish sermons of such priests take people away from the church. So church has an ever increasing fear of losing authority over the masses of people and this fear actually becomes the root cause of such wide spread blood-shed. Thus Puritan church and government make desperate attempt to hold the people in their grip by using a quotation of Bible which says:

“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live”.

However, this attempt proves futile but deadly, which rather than shifting the minds of people towards the Puritan church causes their death and destruction.

Miller’s play is taken on an allegorical level, for though today subjects have changed so far but the subject matter is ever the same. The individual is bound to society in the same way, as John Proctor is in the play, while the authorities are as furious and anxious to hold their power as the Puritan church and government in Salem.

**The Character and Role of John Proctor**

In a sense, The Crucible has the structure of a classical tragedy, with John Proctor as the play’s tragic hero. Honest, upright, and blunt-spoken, Proctor is a good man, but one with a secret, fatal flaw. His lust for Abigail Williams led to their affair (which occurs
before the play begins), and created Abigail’s jealousy of his wife, Elizabeth, which sets the entire witch hysteria in motion.

Once the trials begin, Proctor realizes that he can stop Abigail’s rampage through Salem but only if he confesses to his adultery. Such an admission would ruin his good name, and Proctor is, above all, a proud man who places great emphasis on his reputation. He eventually makes an attempt, through Mary Warren’s testimony, to name Abigail as a fraud without revealing the crucial information. When this attempt fails, he finally bursts out with a confession, calling Abigail a “whore” and proclaiming his guilt publicly.

Only then does he realize that it is too late, that matters have gone too far, and that not even the truth can break the powerful frenzy that he has allowed Abigail to whip up. Proctor’s confession succeeds only in leading to his arrest and conviction as a witch, and though he lambastes the court and its proceedings, he is also aware of his terrible role in allowing this fervour to grow unchecked.

Proctor redeems himself and provides a final denunciation of the witch trials in his final act. Offered the opportunity to make a public confession of his guilt and live, he almost succumbs, even signing a written confession. His immense pride and fear of public opinion compelled him to withhold his adultery from the court, but by the end of the play he is more concerned with his personal integrity than his public reputation. He still wants to save his name, but for personal and religious, rather than public, reasons. Proctor’s refusal to provide a false confession is a true religious and personal stand. Such a confession would dishonour his fellow prisoners, who are brave enough to die as testimony to the truth. Perhaps more relevantly, a false admission would also dishonour him, staining not just his public reputation, but also his soul.

By refusing to give up his personal integrity Proctor implicitly proclaims his conviction that such integrity will bring him to heaven. He goes to the gallows redeemed for his earlier sins. As Elizabeth says to end the play, responding to Hale’s plea that she convince Proctor to publicly confess: “He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!”

John Proctor is the central character and the protagonist of the play. He, as a character reflects Miller’s mastery in portraying his characters. Miller gives very delicate touches in digging the subtleties of Proctor’s relationship with his wife, Elizabeth, and Abigail. Miller also shows very skilfully Proctor’s attitude towards Puritans, Witchcraft, Parris, Hale and court and towards his friends in the end when he was going to be punished for being a witch. Miller also highlights the conflict and the moral choice, which Proctor had to face at the cost of his life. Although, Proctor is the central figure yet he has not been idealized as a hero. He is a blunt, stubborn countryman, though not excessively sensitive yet capable of being tender, especially towards woman. According to John Mahoney:

“The attention of the playwright is on Proctor’s moral choice”.

Prepared by Atta Ur Rahman Jadoon 03335499069
Miller, himself, says in his introduction of the play that he wants to draw the image of “a guilt ridden man” who has a sense of guilt that he has betrayed his wife, Elizabeth by playing adultery with Abigail, who is a very cunning and fraudulent girl. And this shame holds him from taking positive action at the right moment and consequently suffers a great loss of his life.

Then Proctor is a practical farmer, struggling to win a living for his family but he still finds time to take a sensuous delight in his surroundings. He is a strong man, physically strong, cool tempered and not easily provoked. He emerges as a down-to-earth man who speaks his mind and is not afraid of confronting those in authority—the authority of society, priest and that of court. Only his guilt of all with Elizabeth makes him indecisive until very last.

John Proctor is also good independent minded Christian who is fed-up from dogmatic and the strict values of the church only in order to maintain their authority. He also does not care about his infrequent presence in church. He openly condemns Parris and his greedy and hellish sermons. It is Parris hellish preaching, which prompt John Proctor to stay away from church and explain his absence as follows:

“I have troubled enough, I come five mile to hear him preach only hellfire and bloody damnation … others stay away from church these days because you (Parris) hardly ever mention God anymore”.

He is an honest man and sees himself as a sinner and unworthy to follow the martyrs like Rebecca and Giles.

Proctor never interferes with the affairs of others. Miller gives his social views that man can’t isolate himself from the trials of community and the man, who refuses to be committed to some cause, will face tragic result. If a man is to be a part of society, he must function and participate in all the aspects of society.

Proctor tries to avoid any involvement in Salem witchcraft trails. He is afraid of the disclosure of his secrets of adultery with Abigail which was probably no more than a moment of passion prompted by the impetuosity and it also characterizes many of his other actions speeches.

John Proctor retains a very strict attitude towards witchcraft. He does not believe in it and takes it as an irrational act. He does not want to be involved in the court probe about witchcraft but in the end he has to do so. When he learns that Elizabeth has been accused, he says:

“Is the accuser always holy now? Where they born his morning as clean as God’s fingers? I’ll tell you what’s walking Salem—vengeance is Salem. We are what we always were in Salem but now the little crazy children are jangling the keys of the kingdom, and comfort vengeance writes the law!”
But in the end, we see that Proctor is accused of being a witch because of his rebellion against the church and the court. He wants to prove the fraudulent behaviour of the girls but he is accused in return. He is sentenced to death if he does not confess to be a witch. As first, because of the pressure on him he becomes agree to confess and signs it but his innocence and soul does not let him to confess, therefore, he tears out the confessions. He says:

“Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name”.

He does not want to lose his true identity and to be called a witch. Therefore, he sacrifices his body and saves his soul.

Once he abandons the society at its own, but society does not let him maintain himself in the critical junctures of his life. He remains in critical and complex situation of hope and fear and life and death. He remains caught up in a web of moral dilemmas woven by society. He requires an enormous moral courage to make right choice, the choice, which makes all the difference, and we see that Proctor chooses for his soul. This is what Miller wants to tell us. He says:

“My central impulse for writing at all was not the social but the interior psychological question”

**Theme of Relationship between Individual & Society**

No person can completely steer clear of the trials and tribulations of his or her society. He who does may be vulnerable to serious allegations. If a man is to work well in his surroundings, he must partake in all aspects of his society or he is leaving himself open to unfavorable charges. In Arthur Miller’s, The Crucible, John Proctor’s lack of involvement in the Salem witch trials ultimately leads to his execution. John Proctor tries to avoid any involvement in the Salem witch trials. His reason for this attempt is motivated by his past fault of committing adultery with Abigail Williams.

The guilt connected with his lechery makes Proctor hesitant to speak openly because he would condemn himself as an adulterer. Basically, then, in the first act he attempts to isolate himself from the primary proceedings, saying to Reverend Hale:

“I’ve heard you to be a sensible man, Mr. Hale. I hope you’ll leave some of it in Salem”

Proctor tries to wash his hands of the entire affair, than to instead deal with his own personal problems. His wife Elizabeth constantly badgers him about his adulterous affair and he retorts with “Let you look sometimes for the goodness in me, and judge me not”. Rather than interfering in the witch trials he is still trying to defend himself in the dangerous love triangle. In Act I, Proctor attempts to retire to the private world of his
farm and remain completely oblivious to the events arising in Salem. This refusal to become involved is brought to an end when his servant, Mary Warren, announces that she is an official of the court and that Elizabeth Proctor has been “somewhat mentioned” by the woman with whom he had copulated. Proctor still wishes to dismiss the hearings, but his wife uses his guilt about infidelity to extract a covenant that he will expose Abigail as being an impostor. Proctor is being coerced by his wife to become involved, it is not his free and open decision. Indirect characterization can be surmised in the aforesaid situation that Elizabeth is very influential upon Proctor’s character. Harold Bloom avers that this demonstrates that “Proctor’s sense of guilt is central to any understanding of him as a dramatic character”. Before Proctor is forced to take the next step, Reverend Hale arrives and then, Herrick with a warrant for Elizabeth’s arrest. In anger over his wife’s conviction and arrest, Proctor accuses Hale of being a “Pontius Pilate” and later tells him that he is a coward by saying:

“though you be ordained in God’s own tears, you are a coward now!”

The significant self-laceration which John Proctor undergoes while struggling to make his choice is finally convincing because it is perfectly in character, Harold Bloom says: “Miller uses Proctor as a vehicle for the play’s major moral questions”. Proctor is weak, like most men, but he has the potential for greatness likewise common to all men. When John Proctor shouted: “I am no saint”. He asserted his human frailty and vulnerability. As the tragic hero of Miller’s drama, Proctor faces his downfall due to his lack of commitment to humanity. Proctor feels guilty about his relationship with Abigail when he is visited by Hale and asked about his commitment to the church and his knowledge of the Ten Commandments. Proctor inadvertently forgets one commandment: “Thou shalt not commit adultery”. Proctor accounts for his lack of attendance at church in Act 1 by proclaiming that he will not listen to the “hellfire and bloody damnation”, preached by Parris. In Act 2 he states:

“I like it not that Mr. Parris should lay his hand upon my baby, I see no light of God in that man”

An act the town’s people and the court view as a revolt against the supremacy of God. This quote also highlights Proctors’ otherwise principled approval to his life, he is not prepared to do something just because it is expected by the rest of the community. Proctor’s relationship with other characters highlight aspects of his personality. In Act 2 Giles Corey and Francis Nurse come to him for help following the arrest of Rebecca Nurse and Martha Corey. It is apparent from this that he is respected by them. Proctor’s character is also highlighted through how he is seen by his wife. Elizabeth is cooking for him and it is clear that she is wanting to please him. This shows that Proctor is obviously making an effort to please and be loving towards Elizabeth, but she is finding it hard to forgive him for his behaviour. “Spare me! You forget nothin’ and forgive nothin’. Learn charity woman. I have gone tiptoe in this house all seven month since she is gone. I have not moved from there to there without think to please you, and still an ever-lasting funeral marches round your heart”.

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It is important to Proctor how he is seen by other people in the community and for this reason he is reluctant to go to Salem’s court early on, as he would have to admit to the affair with Abigail. He eventually acts correctly, in order to show his love for Elizabeth who risks condemnation from the court on evidence from Abigail. The outraged court officials summon Elizabeth Proctor to find out the truth about Proctor and Abigail. When asked about her husband, Elizabeth's soul is twisted, for reporting the truth could destroy her husband’s reputation, but lying means breaking the solemn oath to God. As she is selfless, Elizabeth choose to lie and save her husband, but perhaps condemn herself to hell for such a sin. This scene indicates dramatic irony, for Proctor knows that which Elizabeth is not aware of, and this is that he has already “confessed it”.

In Act 3, Proctor remains loyal to his friends whose wives have been accused. He is tempted to withdraw his charges against Abigail when he is told his wife is pregnant and in no immediate danger of being hung, but he goes ahead to support his friends. Despite Proctor’s lack of integrity in his relationship with Abigail, Proctor is initially tempted to save his own life by confessing, but he eventually decides to die rather than lose his good name, Proctor’s recognition is his discovery that he contains goodness. “for now I do think I see some shred of goodness in me”. Elizabeth supports him through her confidence that he is a “good” man. “he have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him”. John Proctor is not a perfect man, but his beliefs and values are in the right place. Proctor listens to his soul, a lesson the whole world should learn to follow. John Proctor is a “good” man.

**The Crucible : Arthur Miller’s Style**

Arthur Miller had a reputation for being pedantic. He maintained, and his estate continues to maintain artistic control over his plays. Miller never ever let anyone else have more creative input than himself. He was a visually descriptive playwright both in his stage directions and settings. Miller's plays, including The Crucible include pages of detailed information addressing the concerns of both the actors and the audience.

In preparation for writing The Crucible, he studied pages and pages of court transcripts of the Salem witch hunts in order to develop ideas and to create an authentic dialect. He took small ideas from the testimonies given in the courts and fleshed them out into stories. In fact, the basis for John Proctor’s and Abigail Williams’ affair was based on the tension he discovered that the two of them shared throughout the actual court proceedings.

‘This play is not history in the sense in which the word is used by the academic historian. Dramatic purposes have sometimes required many characters to be fused into one; the number of girls involved in the 'crying out' has been reduced; Abigail’s age has been raised; while there were several judges of almost equal authority, I have symbolized them all in Hathorne and Danforth. However, I believe that the reader will discover here the essential nature of one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history.
The fate of each character is exactly that of his historical model, and there is no one in the drama who did not play a similar-and in some cases exactly the same-role in history.

As for the characters of the persons, little is known about most of them except what may be surmised from a few letters, the trial record, certain broadsides written at the time, and references to their conduct in sources of varying reliability. They may therefore be taken as creations of my own, drawn to the best of my ability in conformity with their known behaviour, except as indicated in the commentary I have written for this text'

Plays can be classified in two major varieties: plays of episodic action and plays of continuous action. Shakespeare's plays are episodic. No one scene is very long, and the action jumps from place to place, sometimes skipping over years in between. On the other hand, Greek tragedies like Oedipus Rex and some modern plays such as Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night, follow what are called the three unities: of time-the action usually takes place within a 24-hour period; of place- there is only one location, and of action-there is no break in the action from beginning to end.

The Crucible falls somewhere in between. The time span is about three-and-a-half months; the action occurs in four different places, although it never leaves Salem; and there is a gap of at least a week between each act (between Acts III and IV almost three months elapse). But within each act the action is continuous from curtain to curtain.

One advantage of the continuous-action method is that it allows the author to build tension or suspense gradually. It also can be less confusing for an audience, because we don't have to stop and figure out where we are every few minutes. And, finally, it allows us to get to know the main characters very well, by letting us watch them for a long time at a stretch. This is especially important in The Crucible, where we come to understand what happened in Salem in 1692 through the experience of one man, John Proctor.

The Crucible was written in an historical style, marking a shift in Miller's preferred writing style from the "naturalistic dialogue of the American middle class" in his first three plays, to a formal, New-England-Puritan style. Miller "makes exemplary use of this new style, its biblical echoes, its metaphorical richness, and its ethical basis". The Crucible concerns the dilemma of "making moral choices in the face of community pressure and about the irrational basis of that pressure". The similarity between the Communist and Puritan witch-hunts allows Miller to formulate an explanation for their inception, along with the destructive effect that speculations can have on individuals when brought before an unsympathetic, judgmental and irrational public. The public's trepidation toward the subject matter of The Crucible was due to the play's remarkable similarity to the political pulse at the time, causing critics to give it "polite, lukewarm reviews", and closed after only a few months. Ironically, The Crucible was successful in an off-Broadway production five years later and was given ample praise by the same critics who previously rejected it. This performance ran over six hundred shows, establishing it as Miller's second most popular play.
Miller’s style is very simple. He uses simple sentences and sentence structure with a simple vocabulary. While using the simple style, Miller does not take away from the suspense in the plot. The dialogues of his characters are like actual speech. His words are used effectively and does not include anything not necessary to convey the idea. He makes the plot and idea interesting by foreshadowing future events.

In The Crucible, the characters do not speak in fragments, and some do occasionally string together phrases. Also, they do form their thoughts carefully before speaking. The sentences are simple and the structure does not vary too much.

In the first passage spoken by Reverend Parris, the speech is more formal than speeches spoken by other characters. This displays that Reverend Parris is more educated than the others. It has a somewhat fatherly, yet commanding tone.

The second passage spoken by Abigail is markedly different from the first passage. The sentences are less thought out and more fragmented. She repeats the phrase “I know you” several times. This shows less education but more deep emotion than the first passage. The tone for this line is moving, but when compiled with Abigail's character, becomes deceiving.

The third passage spoken by Elizabeth shows a clearly thought out idea. It shows that while Elizabeth may not be as educated as someone like Parris, this is a subject that she has thought about a long time. This gives a tone of something like a bottom line or an ultimatum. While Elizabeth does not give a specific choice to Proctor, it is obvious that he must make a decision on what to do.

Miller does not rely too much on imagery. There are few cases of imagery in this play. One remarkably memorable one is the statement by Abigail about the way John Proctor “sweated like a stallion.” While this statement is also a simile, it provides an unforgettable image in the minds of the audience.

The most memorable case of simile is the line, “I know how you clutched my back behind your house and sweated like a stallion whenever I came near!” This statement compares Proctor with a stallion.

Miller rarely uses metaphors or personification in this work. His people generally referred to as people and items as items. Occasionally he alludes to some portion or person in the Bible, but rarely to anything else. For example, while John Proctor is speaking with Rebecca in prison, she alludes to the martyred apostles. Rebecca says, “Let you fear nothing! Another judgment waits us all.” This is an allusion to idea from the Bible that man is judged by God in heaven.

Miller has few cases of verbal irony. He uses it in act 3 while Elizabeth tell she court that Proctor did not sleep with Abigail she knows that he did.
All parts with the girls lying about witches and ghosts are cases of dramatic irony since, while the audience knows that the girls are lying, most of the characters do not. For example, in court, Abigail and the other girls pretend to be attacked by spirits and the people in court fear them to be in danger. However, the audience knows that they are faking it.

Miller’s attitude towards witchcraft is satirical. The tone is serious, cynical, and formal. He achieves this tone by the terrible tragedy of the innocent people executed, and the mental struggles of John Proctor. Miller shows the irony and the unjustness of the witch trials, and thereby the irony and the unjustness of the McCarthy trials.
Ernest Hemingway was born in 1899 in a wealthy, conservative Chicago suburb. The second of six children, he showed an early talent in writing that he honed through work on his high school’s literary magazine and student newspaper. Upon graduating from high school in 1917, Hemingway moved away from home and embarked on a professional writing career, starting as a reporter for the Kansas City Star.

In 1918, during the height of World War I, Hemingway volunteered to serve as an ambulance driver for the Red Cross, which sent him to Italy. Within just a few weeks of his arrival, Hemingway was injured by an exploding shell and was sent to a hospital in Milan. During his recovery, he became romantically involved with a nurse—an episode that he portrayed years later in his novel A Farewell to Arms (1929).

After the war, Hemingway worked as a newspaper correspondent in Paris, where he moved among a circle of expatriate artists and writers, including American writers F. Scott Fitzgerald and Gertrude Stein, Irish writer James Joyce, and Spanish painter Pablo Picasso. Stein, in particular, became Hemingway’s mentor. Some critics have suggested that she provided the inspiration for the character Pilar in For Whom the Bell Tolls, who serves as a mother figure for the protagonist, Robert Jordan.

During his time as a correspondent, Hemingway traveled extensively in Spain and developed a strong interest in Spanish culture. He became especially interested in bullfighting, which he viewed as a uniquely Spanish experience that accustomed Spaniards to face death and thus enabled them to live fuller lives. Hemingway’s interest in Spain led to literary masterpieces such as The Sun Also Rises (1926), a chronicle of a group of disaffected Americans in postwar France and Spain, and Death in the Afternoon (1932), a nonfiction work about bullfighting.

For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940) takes place during the Spanish Civil War, which ravaged the country throughout the late 1930s. Tensions in Spain began to rise as early as 1931, when a group of left-wing Republicans overthrew the country’s monarchy in a bloodless coup. The new Republican government then proposed controversial religious reforms that angered right-wing Fascists, who had the support of the army and the Catholic Church.

After a strong Communist turnout in the 1936 popular elections, the Fascist army commander Generalísimo Francisco Franco initiated a coup in an attempt to overthrow the Republican government. Unexpectedly, the key cities of Madrid and Barcelona remained loyal to the
Republic. This divide marked the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, a conflict between the right-wing Fascists (Nationalists) and the left-wing Republicans (Loyalists), a large number of whom were Communists. Violence exploded all over Spain, and both sides committed atrocities. Many western countries saw the Spanish Civil War as a symbolic struggle between fascism and democracy. Eventually, the superior military machine of the Fascist alliance prevailed, and the war ended in the spring of 1939.

During the Spanish Civil War, Hemingway was involved in the production of two Loyalist propaganda documentary films. Later in the conflict, he served as a war correspondent for the North American Newspaper Alliance. For Whom the Bell Tolls expresses Hemingway's strong feelings about the war, both a critique of the Republicans' leadership and a lament over the Fascists' destruction of the earthy way of life of the Spanish peasantry. The novel is set in the spring of 1937, at a time when the war had come to a standstill, a month after German troops razed the Spanish town of Guernica. At this point, the Republicans still held out some hope for victory and were planning a new offensive. For Whom the Bell Tolls explores themes of wartime individuality, the effects of war on its combatants, and the military bureaucracy's impersonal indifference to human life. Most important, the novel addresses the question of whether an idealistic view of the world justifies violence.

Hemingway's novels are known for portraying a particular type of hero. Critic Philip Young famously termed this figure a “code hero,” a man who gracefully struggles against death and obliteration. Robert Jordan, the protagonist of For Whom the Bell Tolls, is a prime example of this kind of hero. The tragedy of the code hero is that he is mortal and knows that he will ultimately lose the struggle. Meanwhile, he lives according to a code—hence the term code hero—that helps him endure a life full of stress and tension with courage and grace. He appreciates the physical pleasures of this world—food, drink, sex, and so on—without obsessing over them.

Hemingway is particularly known for his journalistic prose style, which was revolutionary at the time and has influenced countless writers since. Hemingway's writing is succinct and direct, although his speakers tend to give the impression that they are leaving a tremendous amount unsaid. This bold experimentation with prose earned Hemingway the 1953 Pulitzer Prize and 1954 Nobel Prize for Literature for his most popular work, the novella The Old Man and the Sea (1952).

Although Hemingway wrote several more novels afterward, he was never again able to match the success of The Old Man and the Sea. In the late 1950s, the combination of depression, deteriorating health, and frustration with his writing began to weigh heavily on him. His depression worsened, and in July 1961, he died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in Ketchum, Idaho. Although Hemingway’s long career ended sadly, his novels and short stories remain as popular today as ever before, and he maintains a reputation as one of the most innovative and influential authors of the twentieth century.
For Whom the Bell Tolls : Background of the Novel

For Whom the Bell Tolls, published in 1940, grew out of Hemingway's personal interest in the Spanish Civil War of the thirties. While still a foreign correspondent in Paris, Hemingway had watched the Spanish political situation developing under the reign of Alfonso XIII. He had visited Spain again during the summer of 1931 after the overthrow of the monarchy. He predicted the civil war would begin in 1935, and when it erupted in 1936, Hemingway began writing and making speeches to raise funds for the Loyalist cause. Later, in 1937, he went to Spain to cover the war for the North American Newspaper Alliance. In reality, the Spanish Civil War was the first battleground for World War II, testing the forces of Nazism, Communism, and Fascism against either the republican or royal form of government. Many young men from the United States and other countries joined the Spanish Loyalist forces in defense of democratic ideals in a war that was won by the dictator, Francisco Franco. Since that war has tended to slip into the dimness of the shadow cast by World War II, the following review of historical and biographical background should clarify a number of things pertinent to the novel.

In the spring of 1931, after several years of civil strife and strikes, municipal elections were held in Spain. The parliamentary seats won in this election were divided between the leftists and rightists in such a way that an extremely dangerous situation was created. In view of this, and in the hope of avoiding civil war, King Alfonso XIII decided on voluntary exile. On April 13, 1931, the republic was proclaimed.

The Communist-Socialist coalition which ruled Spain during the first two years of the republic was, like its predecessors, plagued by strikes, and a general election was called for November 1933. In this election, the rightists were returned to power with a large majority.

The Conservatives were, however, only able to keep themselves in power for about the same length of time that the leftists had. By February 1936, when another general election was held, public opinion had swung back to its previous position. The leftists won this election by a small majority — 256 seats to 217 for the Conservatives.

Five months after the leftists regained control of the government, José Calvas Otelo, a powerful Monarchist-rightist, was assassinated. This was credited with precipitating a revolt which was led by the army, but which had obviously been planned for some time. General Francisco Franco was recalled from the Canary Islands, where he had been sent to keep him out of politics. He flew to Spanish Morocco on July 17 and quickly overthrew the government there, continuing on to Spain the next day.

Within a few hours after Franco’s arrival in Spain, his forces had taken several of the larger Spanish cities, and garrisons of the army all over Spain were in revolt. Surprising and
stubborn resistance from the government’s militia brought this initial surge to a temporary halt, and the capital city of Madrid remained in the hands of the Loyalist–leftists.

Foreign intervention in this revolt which had turned into a civil war was an accomplished fact by August of 1936. Russia was sending "observers" and "volunteers" as well as financial aid donated by its citizens to help in the leftist cause, but they were not industrially capable of giving a great deal of aid in the form of material. In support of the Monarchist–rightists, both Germany and Italy sent planes, tanks, and munitions in addition to the usual "observers" and "volunteers."

The quickly formed Loyalist–leftist forces managed to bring the war to a stalemate during the winter of 1936–37, but this situation was only temporary. By the spring of 1937 (the time during which the incidents of For Whom the Bell Tolls occur), the leftists had, however, gathered enough men and equipment to prevent Franco from overrunning the country. The Monarchist offensive proceeded, but slowly.

International politics played a great part in the civil war during the next two years, giving the advantage first to one side and then to the other. Throughout this period, both sides committed sickening atrocities. The Loyalists were charged with the murders of hundreds of members of the clergy as well as the assassination of their political enemies, and the systematic bombing and strafing of nonmilitary objectives by the Monarchists was a portent of things to come in World War II.

By January of 1939, an almost completely effective blockade was preventing Loyalist troops from receiving further munitions and supplies. Resistance in towns and cities which had managed so far to hold out against Franco's troops began to collapse. Finally, on March 28, 1939, the well supplied Monarchist forces overcame the resistance of the besieged city of Madrid. The long and bitter civil war was over.

After World War I, Hemingway returned to the United States, but by 1921 he was married and back in Europe as a foreign correspondent. He traveled extensively in Spain and was vitally interested in the political developments during the reign of Alfonso XIII, from 1923 until 1931. In 1928 he moved to Key West, Florida, and so was not present for the overthrow of the monarchy in 1931. He returned to Spain for a visit that summer, however, and learned what had happened from his friends there.

When the Conservatives were returned to power in 1933, Hemingway was traveling in Africa. He was not surprised by the failure of the liberal government for two reasons. First, he felt that "the mass of the people were not ready for it and did not want it." Second, though Spain had become more prosperous under the liberals, and though he agreed at least in principle with the civil reforms instituted by them, he realized that the peasants were receiving very
little benefit from the government. The money was going where it had always gone — into the pockets of those in power.

Between 1933 and 1936, Hemingway carefully watched the political developments in Spain. When the civil war finally began in 1936, the only surprising thing to him was that it had come so soon, for as early as the summer of 1935, he had predicted that war would come before the end of the decade.

In 1936 and 1937, Hemingway wrote and made speeches for the purpose of raising money for the Loyalist cause in the Spanish Civil War. Later in 1937, he went to Spain to cover the war for the North American Newspaper Alliance. His announcement, some months after he arrived in Spain, that he was writing a novel with the Spanish Civil War as its background, caused a great stir of excitement and anticipation in the literary world. The result was For Whom the Bell Tolls.

For Whom the Bell : Plot Overview

The Situation: Robert Jordan, an American volunteer in the Spanish Civil War, is given the assignment of blowing up an important bridge in the Guadarrama mountains. The significance of the bridge is that it is situated on the road which is the only supply line for the Fascists. The bridge is to be blown up when the attack on the pass by the Republican forces starts so that the Fascists cannot bring in either supplies or reinforcements. Anselmo, a guerrilla, leads Jordan across the Fascist lines to the hideout of Pablo.

Pablo’s Resistance to the Plan: Pablo immediately recognizes the danger implicit in the plan because not only is it risky but he will have to move out of these hills after the bridge has been blown up. He is sick of being hunted.

The Guerrillas’ Bands: This band consists of Pablo, the leader and his gypsy wife, Pilar. Besides these two there is a young girl, María, who falls in love with Robert Jordan. Rafael, the gypsy, is useless as a guerrilla. Agustín, a youngman, and three other men constitute the entire band. Another band headed by El Sardo is also there in the vicinity. Pilar is for blowing up the bridge if it can help the cause.

Jordan Inspects the Bridge: Anselmo guides Jordan to a point from which he can watch the bridge unobserved. Jordan sketches the bridge to calculate how much dynamite is needed to blow it up, and where to place the sticks. The bridge is guarded by sentries on either bank of the stream, and there are two pickets for sentries. In order to destroy the bridge, the pickets will have to be destroyed too.

Pablo Escapes Being Shot Dead: Jordan is informed that Pablo is capable of treachery. He also learns that the band is divided on the question whether the bridge is to be blown up.
or not. Pablo is against it, and the rest are for it. Pilar is the new leader and supports Jordan’s plan. In the heated argument that follows, Jordan at one time is tempted to kill Pablo but being uncertain of his own position desists. Jordan consults Pilar who approves of his decision of not killing Pablo.

Maria Comes to Jordan’s Sleeping Bag: — Maria, who was the daughter of a village Mayor and was a victim of Fascist atrocities, comes to Jordan’s sleeping bag at night. She has been sent there by, Pilar. They make love that very night. For Maria, Jordan is the first man whom she has loved. Jordan regards the whole affair as a windfall because he cannot think loving a woman on a permanent basis, especially when he is carrying out a dangerous assignment.

Fascists Know of the Attack: — Next morning many Fascist planes are sighted which strike terror in the hearts of these guerrillas, even though there is no bombardment in the area. Anselmo and Rafael are assigned by Jordan the tasks of watching the road and the pickets respectively. Fernando, who has returned from Segovia informs Jordan that there are rumours circulating in Segovia that some bridges will be blown up in this area as a prelude to a Republican attack on these.

Pilar Reveals Pablo’s Past: — Leaving the explosives in Agustin’s charge, Pilar, Maria and Jordan set out for El Sardo’s camp. On the way, Pilar narrates how Pablo had destroyed all the Fascists in his home town at start of the revolution. It was a cruel operation, but the worst came when the Fascists retook the town.

El Sardo Meets Jordan: — El Sardo confirms Fernando’s information. He also realizes how difficult the assignment is but he agrees to help El Sardo’s part will be to destroy one picket while Jordan plants explosives. He also decides to steal sore horses for the retreat to the Gredos.

Jordan and Maria Make Love Again: — On their way back, Pilar goes ahead leaving Jordan and Maria together so that they may make love. Pilar intuitively knows that the lovers do not have much time at their disposal. After making love, Jordan’s head is very clear and he wonders whether he could marry Maria. It is against the Communist discipline that he has accepted for the period of the war. He wonders whether it were possible to lead a life of seventy years in seventy hours.

Snow Spoils Jordan’s Plan: — An unexpected snowstorm overtakes Jordan, Maria and Pilar before they search the camp. In the cave, Pablo describes to Jordan how he came to have Pilar, who was formerly a bull-fighter’s woman. Pablo worked for a horse contractor in Zaragoza where he met Pilar. Pablo teases Jordan that his plan cannot work now that it is snowing outside.
Anselmo and Rafael Report: – There has been much movement on the road that day because the Fascists are carrying their reinforcements to the site of the attack. Jordan also learns how often and when the guards change.

Pablo Escapes Death Again: – Pablo is drinking heavily. He teases Jordan for being a false _professor, for making love to Maria, and for his foolish plan. Jordan cannot fire his pistol inside the cave because of the presence of dynamite there. Agustin picks up a quarrel with Pablo so that he may kill Pablo but the latter backs out of the quarrel. Pablo is convinced that Jordan is a bird of ill omen. He leaves the cave to have a look at the horses but he stands near the mouth of the cave to hear how his fate is being decided. It is decided that Pablo should be liquidated but Pablo on his return declares that he is with the group and thus survives.

Jordan Reflects on His Past and Future: – Jordan is aware of the possibility of his death; so he instructs Anselmo how to blow up the bridge if the former dies. Maria’s love makes him wish to live with her for a long time. He recalls how Karkov, the Russian journalist, had been instructing him in the Marxist ideology which does not go well with his love for Maria. However, he is determined to blow up the bridge at all costs.

Jordan–Maria Affair: – Maria comes to Jordan’s bag for the second night also. Jordan promises to marry Maria after this assignment, even though Maria considers marriage of no consequence; for her Jordan’s love is enough.

Jordan Shoots a Fascist Cavalryman: – Jordan while lying in the bag hears the sound of the arrival of a horse. He sees a Fascist soldier on horseback, whom he shoots at once. Pablo takes away the horse to hide. Jordan predicts that there will be more cavalry to deal with, so he prepares to meet this threat.

Preparations For Escape: – Jordan camouflages a machinegun so that if the cavalrymen penetrate the camp they may shoot at them. Horses are kept in readiness for escape, while their luggage is being packed. Jordan wants to avoid a confrontation that day because a battle will destroy his plan to blow up the bridge. If the worst came to worst he would take Anselmo with him and escape, and blow up the bridge after. Rafael, who is on duty, had been negligent in his watch to let the first cavalryman come in.

More Cavalrymen Appear: – First, a batch of four cavalrymen comes following the trail left by their companion. They come very close to the blind but do not see these guerrillas. They follow the trail and go out of this area. Twenty more cavalrymen appear. They also leave the area without creating any problem. Jordan’s restraint saves the guerrillas’ lives.

El Sardo’s Fight: – The Fascist cavalry following the trail reach El Sardo’s camp where a battle ensues. El Sardo pushes back the attack, reaches the flat top of a hill in a wounded condition, digs in, and prepares for his end. In the afternoon Fascist planes come and
bombard El Sardo’s hill and return to Segovia. Agustin and others who want to go to El
Sardo’s help are restrained by Jordan in whose judgment it would be no more than a Quixotic
gesture. In the evening Pablo and Anselmo bring back reports of El Sardo’s end. El Sardo’s
end increases the element of risk in Jordan’s plan.

Andres Marty Leaves For Golz’s Headquarters: – Jordan realizes the futility of Golz’s
attack because he knows that the Fascists will not be taken by surprise. All preparations for
meeting the attack have been completed. Jordan decides to send Andres Marty to Golz
advising him to cancel the attack. Andres Marty leaves for Navacerrada with the dispatch.

Jordan’s Psychological Problems: – Jordan wants to survive now so that he may live with
Maria but it has nothing to do with his fear of death. His father who had committed suicide
makes Jordan ashamed of himself. Jordan prefers his kinship with his grandfather who had
fought in the American Civil War as a Republican and acquitted himself well. Jordan is under
some psychological compulsion to prove that he is not a coward, and that he will face death
boldly. Despite his despatch to Golz, Jordan knows that he will have to destroy the bridge.

Maria Narrates Her Past: – On the third night Maria informs Jordan that they cannot make
love because there is “soreness and much pain”. Jordan is disappointed but consoles
himself. Maria describes how she was raped by many Fascists, and how she was rescued by
Pilar. Jordan assures her that he loves her as he loves Spain, and all the comrades who have
died in defending this country. Jordan’s resolve to destroy the bridge, is strengthened by his
knowledge of Maria’s suffering.

Pablo Betrays Jordan: – At about 2 o’clock in the morning Pilar comes to Jordan to
inform him that Pablo has disappeared taking with him something from Jordan’s, rucksacks.
They are an exploder, detonators, fuse and caps. Pablo has also taken with him two of the
best horses. Pilar feels guilty of having been negligent in her duty of guarding Jordan’s
equipment. As the loss is irreparable Jordan decides to get some sleep. He brings the
rucksacks out of the cave so that he may guard them himself. The danger to his life now has
increased many times.

Maria Makes a Soothing Gesture: – Towards dawn while Jordan lay fuming and fretting
Maria asks him to make, love to her. On this occasion he has a sort of mystic experience in
love Maria becomes for him not only his wife but his sister and his’ daughter as well. His
head being clear now, he makes a new plan to destroy the bridge.

Andres Marty’s Futile Journey: – Andres Marty, in the meanwhile, slowly moves towards
his destination. The arrangements for the attack are complete. When the message finally
reaches General Golz, the Republican planes are taking off to go and bombard the pass.

Jordan Improvises: – In the morning, with the luggage packed, Jordan gives last minute
instructions to the remaining guerrillas who know that they may not live to see another day.
He is going to use hand grenades instead of detonators and the fuse. The exploding will be done by pulling the pins of hand grenades mechanically. The bridge will be destroyed but so will be the band that has agreed to help Jordan. Pilar is to lead the attack on the lower Agustin is to man the machine gun, and fire upon every approach object while Jordan plants the dynamite sticks.

Pablo Returns: – As the details are being finalized Pablo returns with five more guerrillas who are brave but stupid. He undertakes to attack the upper post. He has destroyed the stolen equipment; so Jordan’s new plan stands. After breakfast, they move to their respective duties.

The Attack: – Anselmo and Jordan have to shoot the sentries on duty. As the morning light filters through the leaves Jordan hears a thud, the signal that the Republican attack has started. Jordan and Anselmo shoot the two sentries. Pilar and Pablo attack their respective posts. Jordan, with assistance from Anselmo, plants the dynamite sticks. Pablo has to deal with not only the post but also some vehicles and a tank. Finally, the bridge is blown up. Anselmo dies on the spot. Pilar loses two men. Pablo shoots the five guerrillas who have helped him in over-running the post. The band assembles near the horses and prepares to leave.

Jordan is Hurt: – Maria is happy to receive Jordan in her arms. Agustin accuses Pablo of murder but Jordan keeps his mouth shut. They move down a slope to cross the road at a point about 200 yards from the bridge. They cross the road successfully except Jordan whose horse is hit by a bullet as a result of which it falls. Jordan’s left thigh–bone breaks and he cannot resume the journey. After a hurried leave-taking, the guerrillas escape towards the Gredos, leaving Jordan behind to deal with the Fascist cavalry that is bound to chase them. Jordan awaits his end lying on the pine–needles. He is tempted to shoot himself but he decides against it. Lieutenant Berrendo who fought against El Sardo is moving towards Jordan, who aims his rifle at him. It is obvious both will die at the end.

**Critical Analysis of For Whom the Bell Tolls**

A New Developments Hemingway: – Hemingway’ had signed “a separate peace” in A Farewell to Arms and his writings in the Thirties are a sort of narcotic which kept him from thinking about society and a writer’s social obligation. The period was devoted to writing a treatise on bull-fighting, a safari in Africa from which resulted Green Hills of Africa, and some admirable short stories like “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” and “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber”. But the Thirties were a time of self–analysis for all thinking men in America; and Hemingway broke fresh ground in To Have and Have Not, whose hero, Harry Morgan, in his dying moments gives the new message for his age: “A man alone ain’t got no bloody chance.”
Separate Peace Ends: - It is a far cry from what Henry, the protagonist in A Farewell to Arms, had thought about man’s role in society. According to Henry: “I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and, sacrifice and the expression in vain……and now for a long time ...I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of placers had dignity ... Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the darts” Henry liked a boy named Gino but his patriotism separated him from Henry who was completely disillusioned with slogans, and The causes that they stood for.

A Commitment to Mankind: - In the play, The Fifth Column, the hero who like Jordan is fighting for the Loyalist cause in Spain declares that he has left love behind, for his love of mankind and his love for his beloved cannot go together. And where I go now I go alone, or with others who go there for the same reason I go.” He also shares Jordan’s ambivalence: “I don’t know where it (his destination) is.” What is of paramount importance is his devotion to the cause, he has chosen to espouse. Jordan likewise is fighting for a cause: “Liberty and dignity and the rights of all men to work and not be hungry.” Jordan has been very pure in his ambitions because he had no thought of anything except the movement and the winning of this war.

Mixed Motives for Participation: - The depression in America and the Spanish Civil War woke his social conscience—and in his capacity as a human being he helped the Loyalists in Spain as far as he could. For Whom the Bell Tolls is a product of a tumult of experience and emotions: the overthrow of the author’s non-political attitude in the face of a pressing need for action, the hate of. Fascism and sympathy for the Loyalist Republic, a romantic love of old Spain, and the enthusiasm and anxiety for the future of the world which flung many artists into the international brigades as if to fight a decisive crusade for human liberty.

A Deep Commitment: - All these themes are present in the novel. The compact structure of the novel, the heightened eloquence of the language, the poignant heart-searching in the novel, the desperate search for new moorings, the seriousness of the intent of the novelist are ample proof of the author’s intense involvement in the movement. He has deeply felt what he has written’ in this book, for it embodies a brusque tenderness and compassion of the author for the suffering Spanish masses who became involved in this human crisis.

An Individual Commitment: - As mentioned earlier Hemingway had broken loose of the aestheticism of the Thirties and entered a new phase of development as a novelist. Jordan is a lost young man who has staked his life for the sake of a people he has come to love. He is doomed to die according to the logic of Hemingway’s vision of the world but this time there
is a major difference. “The only difference”, according to Nemi D’ Agostino, “is that now the individual failure is overtly seen as part of a collective failure, a common drama in which the new ideals and hopes one by one prove fruitless, and in the end only this which remains is the unbroken chain of pessimism and despair.” Jordan lying on the floor of the pine forest and waiting for the Fascist cavalry reflects: “And if you wait and hold them up even a little while or just get the officer that may make all the difference. One thing well done can make.”

Is this all that one pins one’s hopes on? Why is he so dependent on the approval of his grandfather or Karkov for his actions? It is a fatalistic universe, centering round the drama of the individual. It is an elegy sung in praise of the “lonely rebel”.

Contradictions in Jordan’s Ideology: Jordan came to Spain to learn the Spanish language better so that he could teach it more effectively. Here he becomes involved in the Civil War because he feels for this country a strong liking and sentiment. He develops an illusion that there is a cause to fight for. He acknowledges that he has learnt much in this war and he would perhaps write a book about it but the truth of the matter is that he has not learnt much in this war. He still believes in Equality, Liberty and Fraternity and man’s right to pursue happiness but he has accepted Communist discipline for the duration of this war. He is ignorant of the inherent contradiction in these two positions that he has taken. ‘He has experienced love, a fact which challenges the red assertion that in a purely materialistic conception of society there is no such thing, as Love. He is overwhelmed by the dilemma of his position and consequently he has decided to put his thinking and power of judgement in abeyance. Actually each new faith frightens and unsettles the writer, and Jordan—Hemingway is the old tormented individualist divided between his need for the community and the scorn and fear it excites in him. And the novel is not so much imbued with history as impregnated by the confused attitude of that no-man’s party to which Hemingway belongs.

Only Death Triumphs: The book in spite of the heroic stand and the fight of its hero is an elegy on a dying man. It celebrates a triumph of death, dissolution and destruction of all that is good in man. Death hovers over this book from the very opening scene in which Jordan is seen lying on the floor of the pine forest. If the reader is in any doubt Pilar’s prophecy seals Jordan’s fate. The guerrillas are disillusioned despite the bravado shown by some of them. Pablo is a mockery of his former self, and Pilar affirms it. El Sardo, a heroic figure, is, destroyed by the Fascists’ planes and he embodies the utter helplessness of man in a mechanised war. Even Anselmo who is reluctant to kill Fascists meets a fate no different from that of Eladio, or Fernando, or El Sardo. The theme of dissolution is interwoven, in fact in the very texture of the book.

A New Prose—Style Evolved: This gloom connected with the theme of dissolution is relieved by “the breath of poetry”. Hemingway in this novel broke away from his earlier bleak and bare prose which critics had admired and amateur writers tried to imitate, but seldom successfully. He attempted a freer and broader rhythm which has immense
potentiality and power. It touches at times moments of true intensity and genuine dramatic power. Pilar’s account of Pablo’s exploits at the commencement of the movement, María’s account of the death of her parents and Fascists’ atrocities, El Sardo’s last stand on the hill-top, and Andres Marty’s journey from the first Loyalist out-post to the head-quarters of General Golz are classic examples to show Hemingway’s power as a story teller. The last scene in which Jordan awaits the arrival of the Fascist troops lingers long in the memory of readers for here Jordan becomes a solitary figure who symbolises all human loneliness in the hour of death which is unrelieved by hope.

A New Range of Characters: More than the new prose rhythms the novel is valued for its range of human characters that Hemingway has created. María and Jordan are almost types in Hemingway’s fiction but Pilar—a larger than life and mysterious character, and Anselmo—a true Christian, something very unusual in Catholic countries, and Pablo—a sort off debased Ajax, and El Sardo—an inveterate fighter, and many others reveal a new development in Hemingway’s art. According to Nemi D’ Agostino: “He has tried to create varied and trenchant characters, succeeding in setting besides the somewhat inadequate protagonist and the conventionally picturesque portraits of Pilar and Maria such fierce and poetic figures as El Sardo, Joaquin and Anselmo.”

Some Flaws: The novel is one of Hemingway’s most ambitious works and to this fact one can trace some of its strength and weakness. Its language was intended to be in part the intimate expression of the intellectual protagonist, and in part to shape itself around the simple heroes of the guerrilla, and to throw a new light on the epic events. It is dim and turgid in the long meditations of the hero; and in the passages of dialogue, where Hemingway tried to create a platonic language composed of the Spanish idiom, the Bible, and the Elizabethans, it is overloaded with dialectical quotations (which is a critical transfer and not an artistic solution), weighed down with over much local colour, and often forced into melodramatic effects.

Elements of Melodrama: The elements of melodrama are also present in the plot as well and they have weakened the tension of the plot. Pilar’s long description of the smell of death is a case in point. It may be very interesting in itself but it does not contribute to the development of the story nor does it throw any fresh light on any character. Similarly, Jordan’s love-making, and Pilar’s inquiry whether the earth moved, weaken the plot to a great extent. In the long meditations of Jordan, similarly, critics have found flaw for, though they throw light on the hero’s motivation, these is a repetitive quality about them. “There are a good many passages”, according to Philip Young, “in which Jordan appears to be struggling for the faith on which he acts than to have achieved it.” Young also points out that the love story is highly idealized and very romantic, if not sentimental.

In the final analysis the novel demonstrates that Hemingway’s talent was once again intact and formidable, despite the flaws pointed out above. It remains one of his masterpieces.
Whatever the ideologically committed critics may say, the reader if he is unbiased, feels a sense of life, which is an achievement by any standard.

**Main Themes in For Whom the Bell Tolls**

Hemingway is one of the major novelists who touched the apex of literary skies in American literature. He has written many great novels and his contribution has got international acclaim and fame. His contribution to literature earned him prize. He attracted the attention of readers and critics because of his themes and style of telling a story. He is so unique in these two areas that he heroes and writing style have come to be known as Hemingway heroes and Hemingway style. Hemingway’s themes are unique and different from many other American writers. It is true that he carried the influence of many American and English writers.

Hemingway's choice of a John Donne poem as the source of the novel's title and epigraph emphasizes a major theme of For Whom the Bell Tolls: "No man is an island," that is, no person can exist separate from the lives of others, even others living in far-away countries. The theme is demonstrated by the actions of Robert Jordan. Throughout his participation in the Spanish Civil War, he has fought actively for a cause of antifascism. As the novel progresses, his involvement with the guerrillas and his love for Maria, teach him the value of the individual as he or she affects a larger society.

He doesn’t believes in the abstract ideology which doesn’t represent people. For Jordan, Maria represents human love, the first he has ever known. It is for her that he stays behind to allow the rest of the band to escape, demonstrating his realization that others depend on him as he has depended on them. His decision not to commit suicide at the end of the novel represents his ultimate understanding that he must fight for the people whose lives are affected by the cause. Apart from the relationship of individual and society, death is another theme: "his heart beating against the pine needle floor of the forest."

The main topic of the novel is death and violence as effected by war. When Robert Jordan is given the mission to blow up the bridge, he knows that he will not survive it. Pablo also knows that it will lead to their deaths. El Sordo faces that inevitability also. Almost all of the main characters in the book contemplate their own deaths, and it is their reaction to the prospect of death, and what meaning they attach to death, especially in relation to the cause of the Republic, that defines them. Violence haunts the novel, death of Maria’s parents, Joaquin’s tragedy and above all, Robert Jordan awaits his death feeling his heat beating on the floor of Spanish land at the end. The war has affected the lives of people physically as in Maria who loses her physical innocence when she is raped by Fascist soldiers and also psychologically as the changed behaviours of characters like Anselmo who has to suppress his aversion to killing human beings, and Lieutenant Berrendo to quell his aversion to cutting heads off of corpses. War even costs the innocence of people who aren’t involved in it directly as War journalists, writers, and we as readers who abandon innocent expectation. In
war, Hemingway shows that morality is subjective and conditional, and that the sides of right and wrong are almost never clear-cut. All these conditions are resulted by fascism which Jordon calls ‘a lie told by rods’. Later, he talks of the threat of fascism in his country: “…many who do not know they are fascists but will find it out when the time comes”

Thus, salvation lies in romantic love which is another main them of the novel. Even though many of the characters in For Whom the Bell Tolls take a cynical view of human nature and feel fatigued by the war, the novel still holds out hope for romantic love. Even the worldly-wise Pilar, in her memories of Finito, reveals traces of a romantic outlook on the world. Robert Jordan and Maria fall in love at first sight, and their love is grand and idealistic. Love endows Robert Jordan’s life with new meaning and gives him new reasons to fight in the wake of the disillusionment he feels for the Republican cause. He believes in love despite the fact that other people like Karkov entertain “purely materialistic” outlook. Romantic love is one of the most important ways in which Robert Jordan rejects abstract theories in favor of intuition and action over the course of the novel. Loving her transports him from his intellectual world of ideology to the world of real-life relationships. Maria represents the love that humanizes Jordan, making possible his transition from a political partisan to one who recognizes the worth of the individual. For Maria, Jordan’s love is the healing touch she needs to cure the psychic wounds and a moving spirit for Jordon as he declares: “I have not found one [woman] that moved me as they say they should move you.”

The most important theme which is the integral part of Hemingway’s novel is heroism, especially code-heroism. To be a hero, Hemingway believes that a man must display grace under pressure. Most of his characters put themselves into dangerous situations and then act with remarkable bravery in the face of danger. Robert Jordan is no exception. During the novel, Robert Jordan becomes the true Hemingway Code Hero, displaying a penchant for action and grace under pressure. Even though he realizes the dangerous nature of his mission and questions the orders of General Golz to carry it out in daylight after the offensive has commenced, he never doubts his own ability to accomplish the task. Even after Pablo steals and destroys some of his key equipment, he does not run from the danger. Jordan more clearly displays grace under pressure after he has been injured by fascist gunfire. Paralyzed and unable to easily escape with the others, he insists upon being left behind with a gun. When Maria begs to stay with him, he convinces her to leave by telling her his mission will have been worthwhile if her life is saved. Thus unable to travel to safety, he faces death with bravery, firing his gun at the enemy to give the others time to get away. He exemplifies the Hemingway code because the code heroes also fight to the last bit as he stated: “there is something you can do yet”

Finally, there are other themes in Hemingway’s ‘For Whom the Bell Tolls’ ranging from the power of superstition and divination as in Pilar, suicide as in Jordon’s father, the Spanish War and its tragedy and hypocrisy and theme of solidarity as in Robert Jordon. Jordan laid down his life for a cause but the irony of the situation is that he couldn’t make a total commitment
to his “cause” for the Fascists to be killed are, also human beings. “No man is an island”. Thus the novel takes a pure ironical stand in the situation of Spanish War.

The Structure of For Whom the Bell Tolls

Complex Structure: For Whom the Bell Tolls is one of the most complex novels written by Hemingway for it is more than the story of love of Robert Jordan and Maria; or even the story of the Spanish Civil War in which the protagonist loses his life for a cause. It extends beyond the country in which the central event takes place, as it transcends the allotted seventy hours which according to Robert Jordan can be as significant as a life of seventy years.

The Bridge Central to the Plot: In the centre of the action is the bridge that Jordan has come to destroy. The bridge is situated on the road from Segovia to the pass that General Golz is going to attack. That it is a vital bridge is made clear to the reader as soon as the novel begins. “That is the only road on which they (the Fascists) can bring up reinforcements. That is the only road on which they can get tanks, artillery, or even move a truck toward the pass which I attack. I must know that bridge is gone. Not before, so it can be repaired if the attack is postponed. No. It must go when the attack starts and I must know it is gone.” General Golz has chosen the most reliable person who can perform this difficult operation. Even before Jordan has left the General in Madrid he has assured him that he “will do it all right”.

The Spanish Society Represented: The bridge is situated in the Guadarrama mountains and in these hills are scattered the hide-outs of guerrillas who are supporting the Republic. El Sardo and Pablo are the two leaders of guerrillas on whose help Jordan has to depend. These hills are a microcosm of all Spain for in Pablo’s and El Sardo’s caves we have representatives of all sections of the Spanish society.

Pilar, the gypsy woman, is a mother who looks after the band like the mother-earth itself; Pablo is the evil father, for Jordan at least; Anselmo, the old man, is a true Christian whose principles do not permit him to kill men but he is compelled to shed human Jordan’s out of necessity; Joaquin, the nineteen-year brother who has suffered at the hands of the Fascists as Maria has done; El Sardo is the brave guerrilla, who defies death and exemplifies for Jordan the code that laughs at death for it cannot conquer man if he is strong enough in his belief; and then there is Maria who is Jordan’s wife; and then she becomes for him the sister as well as his daughter. Similarly, Agustin, Fernando and the two brothers, Andres Marty and Eladio, are part of the community to which Jordan goes for help to complete his mission.

Pablo’s Role: The skirmish between the Fascists cavalry and El Sardo’s band highlights the dangers that the partisans face every day of their life in these mountains. Pablo had realized
immediately what Jordan’s mission meant to his band—it spelt danger, destruction and death.
He was not at all willing to help him and he tried his best to dissuade Jordan from carrying
out this suicidal plan. He tried to create a split in the band but it failed. Then he was relieved
because he knew that if the snow-storm continued Jordan would not be able to carry out his
mission. However, the snow melted away continued to harp on the old theme. The next day
when El Sardo and his band were wiped out by the Fascists he felt confident that Jordan
would give up his plan. Even this disaster did not prevent Jordan from thinking that he still
had a chance to demolish the bridge. In despair Pablo stole his detonators, fuse and the
exploder because now it would be well nigh impossible to destroy the bridge and thus Pablo
would be safe in his “fox-hole”. However when he returned at three in the morning and
found that Jordan was sticking to his plan he changed his mind and decided to help him. He
was the only one who could lead his band to the Gredos and he could not escape his self-
imposed responsibility. The civil war is made very real to us this way. All the loyalty and
treachery in the Republican ranks is present here in this small group.

**The Whole World is Involved:**
While keeping the bridge at the centre of our interest
Hemingway extends our awareness beyond the Guadarrama mountains. First, there are the
Russian commanders who are guiding the operations from Madrid. They have trained some
Spanish farmers in their military academies who have now taken over the management of the
war from the spontaneous leaders of the Spanish people. The Russians are not the only
foreigners in Spain. The observation planes that scan the Guadarrama mountains are of
German and Italian makes. The Heinkel bombers and Fiat pursuit planes make it clear beyond
doubt that there are other interests involved in Spain. The International Brigades are
testimony enough to prove that the Spanish Civil War was not a local issue because for one
reason or another many countries were involved in this human crisis. Hemingway has rightly
called this war a dress rehearsal for the Second World War. Jordan’s presence in Spain
proves that the ripples of this war have travelled beyond the Atlantic as well.

**Flashbacks Enrich the Plot:**
Through the device of flashbacks, Hemingway has enveloped
the whole of Spain in this narrative. We get from Pilar an account of what happened in the
town where she lived with Pablo before the start of the movement. The ruthless manner in
which Pablo had massacred the local Fascists throws light on the Spanish character. So does
Maria’s story of her misfortune. Her father had been murdered because he was a Republican
and her mother was put to death for she supported her husband. The issue does not remain
political because Maria’s rape is a human issue. She becomes blood-thirsty for revenge
because she has suffered for no fault of her own; it is enough that she is the daughter of a
Republican. She becomes the bride of the “Red Christ”. Joaquin’s story of his suffering adds
up to the same conclusion. No wonder Jordan thinks that the entire future of mankind may
eventually depend upon this bridge and he is conscious of his responsibility in this enterprise.

**Flashbacks Extend the Scope in Time:**
These flashbacks also in a way extend the time
of the action of the story from seventy hours to not only the proverbial seventy years but
also the entire history of mankind. There are frequent references to Jordan’s grandfather who fought in the American Civil War. He believes that his “juice” came from the old man rather than his father who, he believes, was a coward. Again, we are told that Jordan did not want to be another Horatius on the Bridge because he was in love with Maria and he would love to live with her a long time. Hemingway’s glorification of “now” is meant to make us aware of what he called the fourth and the fifth dimensions in prose. The mystical dimension of his love for Maria links him with all the lovers who might have experienced or will experience love in such intensity in any part of the world. This type of love is beyond time and is in fact timeless. This he believes in despite his cynicism which tells him “there isn’t supposed to be any such thing as love in a purely materialistic conception of society.” The idea is that the Spanish Civil War, for the author of For Whom the Bell Tolls and the protagonist in the book, is a landmark in human history—it is a pivotal point for history. The attack to be launched by General Golz is the first by the Republicans and since they have been at the receiving end for a long time Jordan does not want to make a mess of it for if this attack is a flop the Republican morale will go down and whatever is valuable in Spain will be lost for ever. The consequences of the success or the failure of Jordan’s mission are going to travel far and thus the history of the human race may turn on the fate of this bridge. It is to this end that Hemingway has quoted approvingly from John Donne on the cover page of the novel:

No man is an Island, intire of itselfe: every man
is a piece of the Continent, a part of the maine:
if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe
is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as
well as if a Manor of thy friends or of thine
owne were; any mans death diminishes me,
because I am involved in Mankinde;
And therefore never send to know for whom
the bell tolls: It tolls for thee

Epic in Character: – Carlos Baker maintains that the structure of the book is epic—an epic of modern times. In the opinion of this critic the novel reaches epic proportions for the seriousness of its conception and execution. The language of the various speakers has a quaint touch about it; almost Elizabethan in its ring. It is an intentionally heightened language which is quite appropriate to the function to which it has been put. The implications of what is written are much more than what meets the eye. In the visible part the past and the present meet and look forward to the future. The past is present in the present and the future can be seen in the present. For Whom the Bell Tolls is a tragic epic, not unlike the Iliad and “Madrid, like Troy, was fated to fall.” Elaborating his point Baker adds.

Despite the obvious gap between Spain and Ilium, the student of epic may find part of his answer in considering the Homeric parallel. A primitive setting, simple food and wine,
care and use of weapons, the sense of imminent danger, the emphasis on masculine prowess, the presence of varying degrees of courage and cowardice, the rude barbarism on both sides, the operation of certain religious and magical superstitions, the warrior codes—these, surely, are common ties between the two sets of protagonists. Jordan is not to be scorned as the type of, Achilles, and one can recognize in Pablo the rude outlines of debased and sulking Ajax. Pilar the gypsy, though she reads the life line in Jordan’s palm instead of consulting the shape and colour of animals’ entrails, makes the consciousness of the supernatural an operative factor.

As if these were not enough to establish the novel as a modern epic Hemingway seems to have added a few more details to complete the picture. The Fascists’ planes—what Hemingway has elsewhere called mechanized doom—come in threes. They are compared to sharks that are ruthless in their hunt. Pilar is a half-witch, half-woman who predicts Jordan’s death almost infallibly. Her prediction hovers over the book like an evil spirit. Jordan tries to keep it out of his mind but he cannot. Maria confirms it when she comes to Jordan’s bag for the last time. Golz’s despair is evident in his outburst when Jordan asks for the exact time of the attack. In this picture of Nada—nothingness—Jordan and Anselmo are veritable islands of hope for the Republic.

**Irony in For Whom the Bell Tolls**

**Free From Politics:** When For Whom the Bell Tolls was published reviewers and critics from both the Right and Left accused Hemingway of having gone over to the other side. Critics from the Right thought that Hemingway had become a victim of the “red rash”, or “the Marxist measles”; while those of the Left accused him of distorting facts and being unfair to the Republicans in general and Comrade Andre Massart, in particular.

The Marxist critics were disappointed in this novel for they believed that Hemingway, despite his own contribution to the war effort of the Loyalists, lacked a true understanding of the cause of the Spanish people. What these critics failed to comprehend was that Hemingway was not writing a political novel: the Spanish Civil War was only the backdrop— of this human tragedy. He wanted to show something true about human life; and he had come to take a more complex view of humanity at war than he projected in A Farewell to Arms. Similarly, they failed to fully appreciate the significance of the epigraph from John Donne: “And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls: it tolls for thee.” Jordan is not a patriot: he suffers from no illusions about the Spanish people. Hemingway was also aware of the limitations that partisan loyalty imposes on an artist and therefore he chose to remain above party politics and presented life as he knew it. It becomes obligatory for an artist to present “a series of situations pregnant with irony”, if he is to present life as he sees it.

**Jordan Has Fascist Tendencies:** Robert Jordan is trying to be an ideal soldier who is to carry out the orders as he has received them. He has scrupulously avoided asking why he
should carry out those orders given by General Golz, even after he has realized that they are inoperative because of the changed situation. The Fascists have already carried their tanks to the pass that Golz is going to attack and Jordan knows this too well. He still sticks to his original plan of destroying the bridge and consoles himself with the thought that his job is merely to blow up the bridge and not question Golz’s strategy it is not for him to cancel the attack. His attempt to communicate to Golz what he has known about the Fascists preparation to meet the attack is almost half-hearted for after sending Andres Marty with the despatch he is sure that he will have to blow up the bridge. He goes to bed with this certainty within hint; he had to he sure. His inability to change the plan on his own in the light of his superior knowledge betrays Fascist tendencies, even though he is fighting against Fascism. The irony of this predicament is too obvious to be missed. Irony reveals inner turmoil and the author of For Whom the Bell Tolls leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader about Jordan’s ambivalence and inner conflict.

**Non-Spanish Activists in the Spanish War:** The war is being fought in Spain but the chief protagonist is an American, who happened to be in Spain when the civil war broke out. His love for Spain is due to the fact that he is a student of Spanish and he teaches the language in a small college in America. “……the fact that the principal characters in the novel have to be wheedled and cajoled into a sense of duty by an American reinforces the gathering cynicism of the leader for the Loyalist cause.” Nor is the reader allowed to forget that the guerrillas, upon whose help Jordan is so dependent are mostly gypsies of non-Spanish descent.

**Anarchy in the Loyalist Rank:** For Whom the Bell Tolls reveals the absence of co-ordination in the Loyalist ranks and there is a state of anarchy in the Loyalist lines, for the despatch that Andres Marty carries from Jordan to Golz is delayed inordinately by the inefficiency of the bureaucracy. Hemingway also exposes the inability of the commanders to enforce discipline. Anarchism in organised combat leads inevitably to defeat. It is to this outfit that Jordan is attached and he hopes for victory. The irony of the situation is enhanced by the fact that the discipline and co-ordination necessary for victory are present among the Fascist officers. The Loyalist cause is doomed for these reasons from the very start.

**Atrocities Committed by the Loyalists:** That the protagonist’s position is paradoxical is supported by a number of contributory situations. The most outstanding example is Pilar’s account of the start of the movement in Pablo’s home town. She seems to be confessing to Jordan and is bent upon leaving out nothing. She reveals in Pablo a strain of sadism that mounts with every murder that he instigates the farmers to commit. The most shameful atrocities have been committed by decent peasants who initially had revolted at the thought of killing the very people whom they had known all their lives. The grisly and nauseating acts that Pilar is at pains to describe, ironically, have been committed by the Loyalist who are fighting for human dignity and a decent life for all men. The Fascists who had been arrested during the night are flailed and led between a double row of men to the edge of a steep cliff below which flowed a river. Pablo’s plan is to give them a watery burial. The cowardly
behaviour of the Fascists leads the mob to become violent and finally sadistic. Pablo’s hatred of
the priests makes him torture the priest until the mob gets him and leis regret is that the
priest had not died well. To the main frame of this highly ironic episode minor ironies
contribute in no small measure.

**Minor Ironies:** — The irony that these very people are Jordan’s supporters is not lost on
the reader. It is for these people than he is prepared to lay down his life. Robert Penn Warren
thinks that the irony runs “counter to the ostensible surface direction of the story”, but as
Halliday points out “this is the nature of irony”. The prevailing darkness is occasionally
relieved by a glimmer of hope as each one of us must do what we can.

**Jordan is Betrayed by a Friend:** — The theme of betrayal which is one of the most
recurrent themes in Hemingway’s fiction is also present in For Whom the Bell Tolls, and it
heightens the irony in the novel. Jordan had come to Pablo for help thinking that he was one
of the most staunch supporters of the Republic and that he could not blow up that bridge
without his help—it lay in his country, Pablo provides him with sufficient provocation as to
make it convenient for him to liquidate him. He has also been warned by Agustin that Pablo
constitutes a substantial danger to the project. He has also been given the green signal by
the group to kill Pablo. In spite of these clear indications Jordan abstains from carrying out
what was a necessity. And he has to pay a heavy price for this lapse. In the ordinary course
of events it would have been excusable but since this treachery comes from a friend or a
supporter the irony is heightened.

**The Irony of El Sardo’s Death:** — Similar is the case with El Sardo’s annihilation by the
Fascists. He had gone to steal horses for the retreat but the unseasonal snow makes the
venture a big hazard and as a consequence Jordan loses a big ally. Jordan does not let any of
the guerrillas in Pablo’s band go to his rescue and it is highly ironical again that they, despite
their keen desire to help a comrade in trouble cannot do so.

**An Ironic Comment on the Human Situation:** — There are a number of situations in the novel
that contribute to the impression that Hemingway intended the book to be an ironic comment
on the human situation in Spain. The central event of blowing up the bridge is rendered an
exercise in futility for the loose tongues of the Loyalist comrades have betrayed their own
cause. The Fascists know in advance the Loyalist plan to attack the pass, and they have
taken proper precautions to meet it. Jordan’s promise that nothing will go across that bridge
is a mockery of the intention with which it was given. It is due to the treachery of a friend
that Jordan loses such a venerable old man as Anselmo. Pilar’s party which attacked the
saw-mill post loses Eladio and Fernando. Even when Jordan has successfully destroyed the
bridge he cannot escape to the Gredos on account of a fall from a wounded horse—Jordan of
all the people! Jordan had put his thinking in abeyance during the course of the war in order
to win the war first, but now in his hour of death he has to do the final reckoning and he is
not sure that he was right in doing what he did. The doubts about the rightness of his actions had assailed him previously as well:

How many is that you have killed? I don’t know. Do you think you have a right to kill any one? No. But I have to But⋯⋯⋯you like the people of Navarra better than those of any other of Spain. Yes. And you kill them. Yes⋯⋯⋯Don’t you know it is wrong to kill? Yes. But you do it? Yes. And you still believe that your cause is right? Yes.

**Both Parties Pray to the Same God:** Similarly, Anselmo who wants to kill no one is committed to shedding human blood and his sadness is highly touching. The irony is that a man who upholds the Christian ideal of loving thy neighbour is compelled to sacrifice his principles for a cause that is doomed to fail from the very start. Since the start of the movement Anselmo confesses that he had not prayed because he had come to believe that there was no God otherwise He would not have allowed such things to happen which he had seen. But when he sees the dead bodies of the Fascists and the heads of the members of El Sardo’s bands he prays to the same God to which Lieutenant Berrendo addresses his prayer for his dead friend Julian, who has died at El Sardo’s hands. Captain Mara, completely oblivious of his imminent death, goes on shouting obscenities at the hill-top. What could be more ironic than the fact that the two become fellow voyagers.

**Good People on Both Sides:** Hemingway has portrayed Berrendo in very sympathetic colours. He is as committed to his cause as Jordan, or even Anselmo, and believes in the rightness of his cause as firmly as any member of the International Brigades. He is religious as well as kind. He gives orders for beheading the dead guerrillas but cannot see those orders being carried out. “It is he”, writes Halliday, “who looms in the sights of Robert Jordan’s machine-gun in the last paragraph of the story, lending the finale an ironic depth that protects it from false heroics. For these two young soldiers, preponderant as our sympathy may be for one rather than the other, the same bell tolls.” It is tragic irony because both of these young men are human beings of whom mankind could be proud but they are fated to die.

**For Whom the Bell Tolls : War – A Great Cause of Disillusionment**

In the late 1930’s, Spain was in the midst of a civil war. The country had been in a state of disarray since 1931, when King Alfonso XIII went into voluntary exile. This was followed by a five-year power struggle between the fascists, led by General Francesco Franco, and the Republicans. This struggle became violent in the summer of 1936, and the war lasted until 1939, when Franco’s forces triumphed. (Thomas 600)

Ernest Hemingway's 1940 novel For Whom the Bell Tolls tells the story of Robert Jordan and his Republican comrades as they resist the fascists in the fall of 1937. Although a work of
fiction, Hemingway's novel accurately portrays the events of the period, and the characters display many of the attitudes prevalent among Spanish revolutionaries. The two central characters, Robert Jordan and Pablo, begin the war as idealistic fighters, but both become disillusioned as the war progresses.

The Spanish civil war had a violent beginning. Across the country, local peasants revolted against the fascist bourgeoisie, killing 512 people during the first months of the war (Thomas 176). In For Whom the Bell Tolls, Hemingway poignantly and accurately describes the execution of the upper classmen of the Spanish town of Ronda. The peasants of the town, led by a man named Pablo, corralled the town's fascists into the city hall. Pablo had the peasants, armed with flays, form two lines that extended from the door of the hall to a cliff overlooking a nearby river. One by one, Pablo forces the fascists to leave the city hall and walk between the two lines towards the cliff, which the fascists are thrown off; meanwhile, the peasants beat them to death with flails.

Pablo is ruthless in executing the local fascist police in Ronda. As he prepares to shoot one man in the head, Pablo says, "And you are an ugly thing, you murderer of peasants. You who would shoot your own mother" (Hemingway 112). Later that morning, Pablo remains stoically brutal as he prepares to send the fascists out of the city hall to face the angry crowd outside. The fascists are with a priest, and they pray with him before they are sent to their death. Pablo's wife describes how Pablo acts towards these men, and she says,

"I watched Pablo speak to the priest again, leaning forward from the table and I could not hear what he said from the shouting. But the priest did not answer him but went on praying. Then a man stood up from among the half circle of those who were praying, and I saw that he wanted to go out…Pablo shook his head and went on smoking. I could see Don Pepe say something to Pablo but could not hear it. Pablo did not answer; he simply shook his head again and nodded toward the door" (Hemingway 135).

Pablo may be a brutal man, but at this point in the civil war, he is still dedicated to the Republican cause. He is willing to risk much by leading the local rebellion, and he is successful in doing so.

It is interesting to note the way in which Hemingway describes the crowd as they kill the fascists. He compares it to the way people act when they are inebriated. Pablo's wife says,

"But cruelty had entered into the lines and also drunkenness or the beginning of drunkenness and the lines were not as they were when Don Benito had come out…Drunkenness, when produced by other elements than wine, is a thing of great ugliness and the people do things that they would not have done" (Hemingway 127).

In this description, drunkenness is used as a metaphor to describe mob mentality. No person would normally beat a man to death with farming tools unless he were drunk. The people of
the town are sober, but because they have formed a mob, they act as if they are drunk. Pablo utilizes the crowd’s inhuman thirst for blood and directs it against the fascists.

Despite his initial courage, within a year, Pablo had lost his revolutionary fervor. One year after the seizure of the town, Pablo and his comrades have retreated to the hills, and he is not willing to take risks. Robert Jordan, one of Pablo's companions and the main character, is sent to destroy a bridge in the hills near Pablo’s hideout. However, Pablo does not support Jordan because he is afraid that he will be forced to leave his homeland due to fascist retaliation. He says to his comrades, "And it means nothing to thee to be hunted then like a beast after this thing from which we derive no profit? Nor to die to it?" (Hemingway 58). Pablo is no longer a bold commander of men who is fighting for a cause; he has become a coward who is only looking after himself.

The main character also begins the novel as an enthusiastic brave man who is dedicated to the Republican cause. Unlike most of the characters in the book, Robert Jordan is an expatriate from the United States. He believes in the cause of the Republicans so much that he is willing to leave his country and travel half way around the world to risk his life for it. At the beginning of the novel, Jordan's commander asks him if he will accept a mission to destroy a bride. Jordan replies, "I will do it. I will do it all right" (Hemingway 9).

At the end of the novel, Jordan and his comrades are on horseback trying to escape a fascist attack. During the escape, Jordan falls off of his horse and is fatally wounded. As he dies, he is no longer concerned with the cause of the Republicans. Instead, he thinks of his comrades. Dying, Jordan thinks,

"Think about them being away. Think about them going through the timber. Think about them crossing a creek. Think about them riding through the heather…Think about them O.K. tonight…Think about them. God damn it, think about them" (Hemingway 506).

In his struggle to fight the fascists, Jordan ends up giving up his life. But when the time comes to die, he does not care about the Republican cause. He cares about his friends.

Both Pablo and Jordan begin the war as dedicated Republicans. Pablo leads a successful revolt in his local town, and he goes from being a normal peasant to being the commander of a group of revolutionaries. Yet after a year of fighting, Pablo is no longer concerned with the outcome of the war. He is only concerned with saving himself. Jordan also changes his priorities as the novel unfolds. In the beginning, he is a dedicated anti-fascist. Yet as he dies, he realizes that he cares more about the welfare of his friends than for the Republican cause.

Through the plights of these two characters, Hemingway shows that war is a great cause of disillusionment. Initially, both Pablo and Jordan want to fight for freedom and justice. But as the war progresses, they become more concerned with self-preservation and the safety of
their comrades. For them, war is transformed from an abstract fight against fascism into a personal struggle for themselves and their loved ones.

“In Hemingway there is no morality, only ritual; and For Whom the Bell Tolls admirably illustrates this.” Support, modify or contradict this statement.

Two Schools: – On the question of morality, Hemingway specialists are divided into two well-defined camps. One school believes that Hemingway’s honest and uncompromising standards of thinking and acting contain all that matters about morality in the modern world; others dismiss his ideas of right and wrong as crude, neurotic, and intellectually stunted. There is little hope of reconciling these views but the fact remains that Hemingway’s works reflect a deep concern with the questions of right and wrong. It is also true that he did not spell out very clearly his concepts of moral right and wrong because for him the ‘what’ got transformed into ‘how’. His concern for the observance of ritual overshadowed his morality.

Definition of Morality: – He defined morality in Death in the Afternoon: “I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after.” His writing is pervaded by an ironic tone associated with moral austerity. Honesty, integrity, honour and truth without having been defined carry strong emotions with them. He, as is well known, shied away from abstractions, while he has lavished enormous care on details of how certain acts are to be performed.

Morality Rooted in Something Outside Oneself: – An accepted assumption about morality is that it is rooted in something outside oneself—say in God, mankind, country or even family. Obligations to these are not arbitrary, and they are of a fundamental nature. True morality does not reside in one single act but is comprehensive enough to cover an individual’s entire conduct.

Ritual Defined: – From the point of view of a strict moralist, ritual is artificial, contrived and even whimsical. Ritual is a kind of game and a serious game. It creates its own occasions, its own setting in which to act. But it has its own morality, or rather its own aesthetic. In an important sense, it is an art to be judged in aesthetic terms. It has been rightly called “a disciplined rehearsal of right attitudes.” A prescribed series of gestures mechanically symbolize one’s feelings about ultimate things. The emphasis in ritual is on the performance of a preconceived drama which has its own meaning. Morality adapts itself to the occasion; the form of ritual is fixed. The meaning of ritual is in the action itself.

Jordan’s Naive Belief: – When Jordan came to Spain with a view to fighting against Fascism he was a naive person. He accepted communism and felt like a religious convert. In his own words
It gave you a part in something that you could believe in wholly and completely and in which you felt an absolute brotherhood with the others who were engaged in it. It was something that you had never known before but that you had experienced now and you gave such importance to it and the reasons for it that your own death seemed of complete unimportance, only a thing to be avoided because it would interfere with the performance of your duty.

Realities of War Destroy That Faith: – Jordan cannot sustain this faith for long. His belief in communism disappears as he becomes familiar with the ugly realities of war. When we meet him in the novel, he has no politics. He accepts communist discipline for the duration of the war because it is the best available. Discipline becomes an arbitrary set of rules for him—a ritual, in fact.

The Need to Suppress Thinking: – Under these circumstances, it is clear why Jordan suppresses all thoughts. He understands the role of the communists in Spain but to take his thinking to its logical conclusion implies that he must give up his activities. He knows who the peasant commanders in reality are, but he continues to work with them. He understands Pablo’s intentions when he brings those five guerrillas with their horses to help Jordan, but he keeps his mouth shut. He terms his insoluble problems discipline and goes on functioning because he has a bridge to blow up. It is the grand ritual to which he sacrifices truth and other moral values.

Blowing up the Bridge : A Ritual: – The destruction of the bridge becomes his supreme goal even when he knows that it is futile to destroy it. Fernando learns in Segovia that Fascists know of the Republican attack and El Sardo confirms it. But Jordan persists. El Sardo’s death makes the task all the more difficult and yet his determination to blow up the bridge is unshaken. Pablo steals his exploding device and detonators, but Jordan has other alternatives. Since Agincourt, he has found fault with others’ battles, therefore he wants to fight his own so that it is fought the right way—ritualistically. And all along his pretext is that he is following Golz’s orders.

Death : A Ritual Too: – Finally, when he has to face death, the earlier feeling of the brotherhood of mankind is no longer there. Death is no longer unimportant for he wants to live. Hemingway specifically shows that Jordan’s death is to be a waste, that it does not contribute substantially to the cause because the attack of which it is a part is doomed to failure by bad communications. And Jordan is aware of the waste, and that by blowing up the bridge and sacrificing himself no useful purpose will be served. In fact, he is prepared to sacrifice the guerrillas with whom he has established strong ties of loyalty, friendship and love. His courageous encounter with death, when it finally happens, has become almost wholly a ritual action. The emphasis all the time is on correct acting and correct dying. He must attain ritual correctness. "You follow orders. Follow them and do not think beyond
them.” His last battle and death are “a festival” for him: he has become so dispassionate about his own death.

An Aesthetic Experience: In the last scene Jordan is no different than Romero in the bullring who must give a perfect demonstration. The odds do not matter: his performance will be appreciated by a few aficionados. There are no moral questions left, or at least they are so oversimplified that at they do not matter. The beauty of the act lies in its correctness. The audience plays up the aesthetic character of the performance, and also links up with the fact that primitive ritual is almost always public and tribal: calling for some sense of community. The ritual fails to effect moral good in the last analysis Hemingway does not seem to have distinguished clearly between ritual and morality.

“For Whom The Bell Tolls” as a Modern Tragedy

“For Whom The Bell Tolls” is a modern tragedy, as it depicts the conflict, struggle, tension and frustration of a modern man.

A modern tragedy is quite different from classical standards. According to Aristotle, tragedy is a story of conspicuous man who fall from prosperity to adversity because of his error judgment, i.e., hamartia, his death is not essential, but his fall arises a sense of pity and fear for him, in us. But in a modern world, there are no kings and princes, who could be regarded as “conspicuous”, therefore, modern tragedy is the story of a common man who falls from prosperity to adversity, because of his error of judgment, i.e., his hamartia, but his death is not essential, but his fall arises a sense of pity and fear, in us. Secondly, now a modern man is not confronted with the supernatural forces of his surroundings and society. Thus a modern tragedy is different from a classical tragedy.

Hemingway writes in an effort to reduce the harms done by the two world wars. He presents a picture of the post war scenario, when the atomic weapons shattered all the dream of global peace. There was a big generation gap in the society and a sense of lost ness. Hemingway portrays in his novels, a microcosm of that larger universe, and gives a lesson of constant and untiring struggle.

Robert Jordan is a typical Hemingway protagonist. He is an American volunteer. He is very sensitive and intellectual man who wishes for the global peace. He believes that liberty diminished at one place means some liberty lost everywhere. Because of his this belief, he is fighting Spain for republican he is not only fighting the war of the freedom of Spain, he is also fighting a mental and psychological war of self-realization and self-assessment. He has been assigned the duty of blowing a supply line bridge up, of Fascists and through this duty: he wants to judge his mental and physical usefulness for the world.
Hemingway’s hero is usually a disillusioned but a reluctant man. He is aware of the futility of action but tries to avoid this awareness by indulging into sensual pleasure. Robert Jordan also tries to avoid his thoughts and seeks refuge in Maria’s arms and intoxication. But being an intellectual he cannot escape from his thoughts. He knows that his action of blasting the bridge would not help the Republicans and the Fascists would not be stopped; yet he continuous his work. The reason is the accomplishment of duty, which has been assigned to him, and an inner satisfaction that at least he has done what he could do. He feels that he is fighting for his love of Spain, for his love of Maria and for his love of freedom as he says: “You believe in life, liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”

But this is a kind of self-deception and false justification of his useless act and this proves his flaw, which leads to his tragedy.

However, it is a preoccupation of a Hemingway Hero, which he goes too far in the accomplishment of his duty, regardless of any danger. Hemingway adopts this trait to achieve his moral end, and this gives a new dimension to tragedy. He has moralized the tragedy, “despite Hemingway’s preoccupation with physical contests, his heroes are almost always defeated physically, nervously, practically; their victories are moral ones”. As we see that Jordan remains stick to his duty. He says: “You can do nothing for yourself but perhaps you can do something for another”.

This belief keeps him firm, even when Pablo betrays him and leaves with the blasting material. This is the moment of his moral uplift.

There is a sure fear of his death, but he goes on. Though life is dear to him, but dearer than life is the justification of his courage, which his father lacked. He also hints this in his saying: “May be I have lived all my life in these seventy hours”.

Jordan successfully blows up the bridge but, while moving away from the scene, he falls from his horse and breaks his leg. This is the most pathetic and tragic situation, when a man achieves success at one moment and loses everything at the other. The reader feels extreme pity for Jordan at this stage.

The ending moments of the novel are the most convincing and magnificent ones, when Jordan is lying on the ground waiting for fascists to come. So that he may be able to prove his courage and strength by fighting till the end. He repeated utterance: “I wish is not made for defeat”.

I create a moving effect. The dramatic ending of the novel gives a message, a lesson and also hope to the reader that: “Man is not made for defeat”. Jordan proves that: “A man can be destroyed but not defeated”.

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Jordan fights till end and sacrifices his life for duty. He dies not only for Spain, not only to save the girl, Maria, whom he loves, but also for his own sake and in fulfilment of a moral duty. So his only reward is the consciousness of duty done. And again: “Winner takes nothing”.

But it seems that Hemingway had found something to die for, and he seems to imply that if you die as Anselmo or Jordan died, then physical death means nothing, death has no sting for the dying man rather he dies victoriously and his death is a moral victory.

Thus we can conclude that “For Whom the Bell Toll” is a modern tragedy in which an ordinary hero—an American volunteer falls from prosperity of adversity because of his hamartia, i.e., his extreme sense of duty. He dies a physical death but wins a moral victory. His sufferings arise a sense of pity and fear in us.

**Hemingway’s Nihilism**

The term nihilism implies the negation of any authority and code at the heat of the universe. Hemingway has largely been accused of being nihilism. It is said that his heroes have no code to follow; that they are living on their own, that they are lost in this world thus they are hopeless and chaotic. A critic remarks: “---Again and again, Hemingway was writing of the – the end of life, the end of love, the end of hope, the end of all”.

But to condemn his writing, by pronouncing nihilism, is to do injustice to him. Though Hemingway writes of the chaos and desperate situation, yet he provides a hope and code for life. If he denies the presence of God, heals creates new gods, for his heroes, in the apparent forms i.e., honour, dignity and struggle. He gives the code of constant and untiring struggle for life.

In his writings, Hemingway focuses at the lost generation, which emerged in the consequence of the two highly explosive World Wars. In19th century mankind was enjoying global peace, economic stability and scientific progress. People were thinking that Man has conquered the beast in him and has learned to live peacefully. But all these idealistic dreams shattered away, when the First World War emerged due to this very industrial progress. The men who entered war with patriotic ideals were stunned atman’s inherent Barbarity when they realized the horrible uncertainty, pithiness and meaninglessness of life, they were desperately disillusion with the hollowness and emptiness of the high sounding slogans of religious and political leaders. Moreover, Darwin’s theory of evolution added fuel to fire and crumbled the roots of Christianity. It was felt that “God does not exist and man has to face all the consequences of this”. Hence: “Man is forlorn: because neither within him nor without does her find anything to ding to”.

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Hemingway captures all this nothingness and forlornness in his stories. His heroes represent the lost generation. They are usually expatriates, disillusioned with war. They have utterly disappointed with the nothingness of life and seeks refuge in drinking, sex, wandering. Hemingway depicts his heroes at war, sometimes physically but most often metaphorically. Then, within the course of their war, they get the code is of unending struggle regardless of victory or defeat.

His hero in “The Old Man and the Sea”, Santiago says: “Pain does not matter to a man”. Then: “Man is not made for defeat”. And finally, he says: “A man can be destroyed but not defeated”.

In “The Sun also rises”, there is a massage of hope: “A man can live only through the manly encounter against death”.

Robert Jordan in the “For Whom the Bell tolls”, is confused about his aims. He is disillusioned with war; he loves humanity and wants peace. But to establish peace, he has to fight against the evil. He is not certain about the usefulness of his action, though takes refuge in Maria’s arms, yet he resolves to continue his task. He says: “You can do nothing for yourself but perhaps you can do something for another”.

It is an understanding assumption of Hemingway’s philosophy that there is no world beyond the grave. Therefore, one’s victories and losses are to be measured in terms of this world and not in the world beyond the grave. Life is tragic, sad and there is no escape from pain, therefore, it is useless to try to escape the inevitable. Hence what one can do is to be a man. When man is afflicted with misery pain or sorrow or even death, the proper way to face it is to remain true to oneself and one’s companions, to endure pain and must fight like Santiago against the heavy odds. To give up a fight would be unmanly. One must achieve moral victory even though he has nothing to win. Robert Jordan has to remain undefeated, to prove his moral victory. He fights not only for the sake of Spanish freedom, but also for the fulfilment of his moral duty and his reward is the consciousness and his satisfaction in the duty done.

This constant struggle and absoluteness of duty is something, which one can cling to in the present times. Hence, Hemingway should not be pronounced as nihilism, prevailed in his time, and presents the solution of it rather he gives the faith of constant struggle and a moral victory to his readers. Thus the outlook or the background of his novels is nihilism but the message of his novels is the message of hope and confidence.

**Hemingway’s Message : Man Can Be Destroyed but Not Defeated**

Hemingway was considered to be a man more than life. He thrived to reduce the life than its gigantic stature. He wanted to explore more and more about the gravities of life. He had seen both pre-war and post war situations. He had deeply observed the change in the attitude of people, towards life and their scattered dreams and desires. Thus, he sought to give message
to the post war generation –the message of struggle for life. He taught them that man can live only through the manly encounter against death and miseries.

Nineteenth century was the period of the boon of humanity. There was industrial rise and scientific progress. Mankind was enjoying global peace and stability. Man was thinking that he had conquered the beast in him and had learnt to live peacefully. But them, this wide spread scientific progress brought two most destructive and fierce worldwide wars. With the advent of these wars, all the thoughts and dreams of a peaceful and progressive future shattered. People look refuge in sensual pleasure i.e. drinking, free sex and wandering and avoided thinking. These people, after the wide spread devastation of wars, were pronounced as the Lost Generation.

Hemingway writes his stories, to guide his lost generation. They are expatriates, confused and frustrated beings, indulged in drinking, gambling and sexual pleasures. Hemingway wants to give them a code of life, higher than any ethical code. This is a code of “constant struggle”.

Hemingway creates a microcosm of the post war scenario in this story and delineates his characters, very close to real men, with their tensions and conflicts. Almost all of his protagonists are representatives of lost generation. They are all disillusioned with war, but each experiences this situation differently. Yet one thing is common in all of them that they have to struggle for life. Henry hates war: at he has to fight for life. Jordan knows that war is destructive: he wants peace and is aware of the feet that to attain peace, it is necessary to suppress force, by force.

Hemingway perceives life as a struggle, in which man has no choice except to fight. Santiago has to go far away, on the sea, to fight with evil, regardless of any loss. Robert Jordan has to blow up the bridge without considering its usefulness. It also gives a view that duty, must be done at any cost, and a duty assigned to an individual should be considered special in its way. Jordan says: "If I have to do what I think, I will have to do: it will be very select indeed".

Besides fighting with the outer circumstances, Hemingway’s protagonist also fights a battle of inner self. He knows the worthlessness of his act, yet he fights to prove his courage and strength by accomplishing that act. Jordan realizes the futility of his act: he also loves life and feels: “This world is a fine place”. Though life is dear to him, yet dearer than life is the need to justify his courage, which his father lacked.

Hemingway feels that winner gets nothing in this world. The victory of his protagonist is never physical but always moral. Santiago, after successfully achieving victory over Marline loses it during his journey back to home. Jordan successfully blows the bridge, yet, in the end, his is a loser –loser of his life. All that is achieved in all this exercise is the insight that one must go on struggling come what may and whatever is the cause. Thought he winner
gets nothing yet he attains moral dignity. Jordan says: “You can do nothing for yourself but perhaps you can do something for another”.

Hemingway holds the view that whatever has to be done, has to be done with good grace. He says in “Old man and The Sea”: “Pain does not matter to a man”

Robert Jordan repeatedly wishes for the arrival of Fascists, to the end of the novel, because of his increasing pain. Yet he does not choose to kill himself. He feels that to die a courageous death is better than to live, as a coward in owes own eyes. He says: “I wish, they would come now”. He fights bravely and does not lack courage. He proves: “A man is not made for defeat”.

Jordan fights till end and sacrifices his life, for duty. He dies not only for Spain, not only to save the girl, Maria, whom he loves, but also for his own sake and in fulfilment of a moral duty. So, his only reward is the consciousness of duty done. Thus he proves that: “A man can be destroyed but not defeated”.

**Hemingway’s Concept of Hero and Code Hero**

Robert Jordan, a tall, a thin young man, with sun streaked fair hair, and wind and sun burned face, is one of the most complicated heroes, in Hemingway’s fictions. He is a typical Hemingway hero who fights till end and wins a moral victory for him.

Two categories of heroes are found in the novels of Ernest Hemingway. One of which is a round character who finds himself unfit for the circumstances in which he is surrounded, but with the passage, of time he evolves certain values, which make his survival possible. According to the critics, this kind of character is “Hemingway Hero”, or “the Tito”. In the other category of hero is a developed character that does not need for further improvement. He is a confident man who knows his area of action and his skills. He serves to teach, the Tito, and thus is called “the Tutor” or “the code hero”.

Jack Barnes, Nick Adam, Fredric Henry etc., are all Hemingway’s typical heroes. They have been presented in the background of First World War. They portray the attributes of “Lost Generation”. They have got disillusioned with war and, therefore, remained under great stress. War has shattered their all the ideas of religion, humanity, love and peace. Hemingway at first shows through them the death of love, lost ness and forlornness’ and finally the moral code of life that “a man can be destroyed but not defeated”. Hemingway hero is a sensitive and intellectual being, but he suppresses his thoughts, he suffers from “Nada” the extreme feelings of nothingness. Inconsequence, he leads a life of sensuousness and seeks pleasure in sexuality, drinking and roaming about.
Hemingway takes life as a battle, in which man has to fight till his end. Therefore, his hero is always revealed in a war or war-like conditions, fighting against natural or human forces. This war can either be physical or spiritual or both. Within the course of his war, he learns the code of his life that: “A man is not made for defeat”. And that: “A man can live only through the manly encounter against death”.

This code helps him to achieve a moral victory. Hemingway believes that “a winner gets nothing in this world”, therefore, we see. “Despite Hemingway’s preoccupation with physical contests his heroes are almost always defeated physically their victories tries are moral one”.

Robert Jordan is considered to be the most complex of all heroes, presented by Hemingway. He has seen excessive violence and bloodshed and is thoroughly aware of the cruelties of war, yet he is ready to fight for the cause of “humanity”. He is an idealist as well as a realist. He knows “neither all fascists are black nor all republicans are white”, but he fights for the betterment of Spanish people, as his meditations reveal: “You believe in liberty equality and Fraternity. You believe in life, liberty and pursuit of happiness”. Thus, as it is common with Hemingway’s heroes. Jordan is also shown under great stress and tension –at the same time though he criticizes his actions yet he is also ready to blow the bridge.

He is very sensitive and intellectual being but he feels that thoughts are not appropriate for the world in which he is living, he takes refuges in drinking and sexually. Though he does not want to keep his mind busy in thinking about the rightness of his action, as he feels “to worry is as bad as to be afraid”. Yet he keeps himself busy in the unrealistic thoughts of a happy future with his beloved Maria. “When there was no understanding only the delight of acceptance”.

Though he likes “good things” of life yet he is so committed and honest to himself and his duty, that he does no let these things, come in his way. Even he attributes his love for Maria to his love for Spain as he says: “I love thee as I love that we have fought for”.

He is so honest to the job that is assigned to him that he can understand that to blow the bridge is futile, yet he blows it, for it is the very order given to him.

Being a main character of Hemingway, he also fights his personal psychological battle in Spain. Jordan is extremely ashamed of his father, who attempted suicide instead of fighting. He wants to wash out his guilt. Though the life is dear to him, yet dearer than life is the need for the justification of his courage, which his father lacked. Thus, the war has a “double importance” for him. He says: “My mind is in suspension until we win the war”.

He idealizes his grandfather, who was a courageous warrior and had died in a battle. Fighting against the enemy, Jordan seeks his code within the thoughts of his grandfather and is determined to fight till his death. When he falls from the horse and it breaks his leg, Jordan remains there to cover the escape of his companions. At this time it is the memory of his
grandfather, which keeps him firm on his decision. Though he is disappointed yet not desperate. He has learnt the lesson like Santiago that: “A man can be destroyed but not defeated”.

Near the end, he bears the pain courageously, and proves that “pain does not matter to a man”. He appears to be satisfied on achieving the moral victory over his enemy. This is the lesson Hemingway wants to give through his writings that fighting matters more than winning and one who fights till the end, is the winner in true sense.

Thus we can conclude that Robert Jordan is a typical Hemingway hero, with all the heroic qualities in him. He also retains some of the autobiographical touches in his characters; this quality of his personality also enriches his personality in the eye of the readers.

**For Whom the Bell Tolls : Background of “Lost Generation”**

Seeking the bohemian lifestyle and rejecting the values of American materialism, a number of intellectuals, poets, artists and writers fled to France in the post-World War I years. Paris was the center of it all. American poet Gertrude Stein actually coined the expression "lost generation." Speaking to Ernest Hemingway, she said, "You are all a lost generation."

The term stuck and the mystique surrounding these individuals continues to fascinate us. Full of youthful idealism, these individuals sought the meaning of life, drank excessively, had love affairs and created some of the finest American literature to date.

There were many literary artists involved in the groups known as the Lost Generation. The three best known are F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos. Others usually included among the list are: Sherwood Anderson, Kay Boyle, Hart Crane, Ford Maddox Ford and Zelda Fitzgerald.

Ernest Hemingway was the Lost Generation's leader in the adaptation of the naturalistic technique in the novel. Hemingway volunteered to fight with the Italians in World War I and his Midwestern American ignorance was shattered during the resounding defeat of the Italians by the Central Powers at Caporetto. Newspapers of the time reported Hemingway, with dozens of pieces of shrapnel in his legs, had heroically carried another man out. That episode even made the newsreels in America. These war time experiences laid the groundwork of his novel, A Farewell to Arms (1929). Another of his books, The Sun Also Rises (1926) was a naturalistic and shocking expression of post-war disillusionment.

John Dos Passos had also seen the brutality of the war and questioned the meaning of contemporary life. His novel Manhatten Transfer reveals the extent of his pessimism as he indicated the hopeless futility of life in an American city.
F. Scott Fitzgerald is remembered as the portrayer of the spirit of the Jazz age. Though not strictly speaking an expatriate, he roamed Europe and visited North Africa, but returned to the US occasionally. Fitzgerald had at least two addresses in Paris between 1928 and 1930. He fulfilled the role of chronicler of the prohibition era.

His first novel, This Side of Paradise became a best-seller. But when first published, The Great Gatsby on the other hand, sold only 25,000 copies. The free spirited Fitzgerald, certain it would be a big hit, blew the publisher's advance money leasing a villa in Cannes. In the end, he owed his publishers, Scribners, money. Fitzgerald's Gatsby is the story of a somewhat refined and wealthy bootlegger whose morality is contrasted with the hypocritical attitude of most of his acquaintances. Many literary critics consider Gatsby his best work.

The impact of the war on the group of writers in the Lost Generation is aptly demonstrated by a passage from Fitzgerald's Tender is the Night (1933): "This land here cost twenty lives a foot that summer...See that little stream—we could walk to it in two minutes. It took the British a month to walk it—a whole empire walking very slowly, dying in front and pushing forward behind. And another empire walked very slowly backward a few inches a day, leaving the dead like a million bloody rugs. No Europeans will ever do that again in this generation."

The Lost Generation writers all gained prominence in 20th century literature. Their innovations challenged assumptions about writing and expression, and paved the way for subsequent generations of writers.

The Lost Generation is a term used to describe a group of American writers who were rebelling against what America had become by the 1900's. At this point in time, America had become a great place to, “go into some area of business” (Crunden, 185). However, the Lost Generation writers felt that America was not such a success story because the country was devoid of a cosmopolitan culture. Their solution to this issue was to pack up their bags and travel to Europe's cosmopolitan cultures, such as Paris and London. Here they expected to find literary freedom and a cosmopolitan way of life.

A cosmopolitan culture is one which includes and values a variety of backgrounds and cultures. In the 1920's the White Anglo Saxon Protestant work ethic was the only culture that was considered valued by the majority of Americans. It was because of ethics such as this which made the cosmopolitan culture of Paris so alluring. American Literature went through a profound change in the post WWI era. Up until this point, American writers were still expected to use the rigid Victorian styles of the 19th Century. The lost generation writers were above, or apart from, American society, not only in geographic terms, but also in their style of writing and subjects they chose to write about. Although they were unhappy with American culture, the writers were instrumental in changing their country's style of writing, from Victorian to modern.
Hemingway is probably one of the most celebrated authors of his time. Hemingway is well known for his fiction. His take on fiction is something invented or imagined. Main topics were centralized around his love of embellishment of the facts. Hemingway did not have the education as many other writers of his time, rebelling against his parents attempts to send him to colleges. His idea of education did not consist of lectures, and research papers, but of life experiences, and his love of reading. Hemingway's readings centered around Russian writers such as Tolstoy and Turgrnev. Tolstoy was a primary influence in Hemingway's writings. WWI also had a profound impact on him as well, as he was an ambulance driver during the war. He hated the abstract, especially abstract words such as honor, glory, and courage.

Hemingway held strong to old beliefs, and symbolism, as he used symbolism to depict the Protestant religion he could not accept. He used observation and description in his works, rather than rhetoric views. The concept of war fascinated Hemingway, as well as the experiences one could endure in a lifetime. One of the most famous works, "Farewell to Arms" depicted the uselessness for words such as honor and glory, because they were not the first things in a soldier's mind as he walked onto the battlefield. Hemingway's works were raw, and dilled with the notion that one could be inside the characters mind, the concrete, and not around in the abstract view of his works.

The Aimlessness of the Lost Generation: World War I undercut traditional notions of morality, faith, and justice. No longer able to rely on the traditional beliefs that gave life meaning, the men and women who experienced the war became psychologically and morally lost, and they wandered aimlessly in a world that appeared meaningless. Jake, Brett, and their acquaintances give dramatic life to this situation. Because they no longer believe in anything, their lives are empty. They fill their time with inconsequential and escapist activities, such as drinking, dancing, and debauchery.

In “The Sun Also Rises” it is important to note that Hemingway never explicitly states that Jake and his friends’ lives are aimless, or that this aimlessness is a result of the war. Instead, he implies these ideas through his portrayal of the characters’ emotional and mental lives. These stand in stark contrast to the characters’ surface actions. Jake and his friends’ constant carousing does not make them happy. Very often, their merrymaking is joyless and driven by alcohol. At best, it allows them not to think about their inner lives or about the war. Although they spend nearly all of their time partying in one way or another, they remain sorrowful or unfulfilled. Hence, their drinking and dancing is just a futile distraction, a purposeless activity characteristic of a wandering, aimless life.

Hemingway’s Contribution to the Art of the Novel

A Spokesman of the Age: Hemingway, by writing of the condition of the modern man and his agonized and futile responses to the calamities that befell him, carved a niche for himself
in the temple of immortality. The Swedish Committee set the stamp of approval on him by awarding him the Nobel Prize in 1954, even though he did not come up to the ideals of the philanthropist. Primarily the learned committee commended his contribution to the style of modern narration especially in The Old Man and the Sea yet they had in their minds Hemingway’s writings of the last thirty years. The literature of the Twenties would be poorer for the loss of The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms. For Whom the Bell Tolls remains a landmark in American fiction of the Forties.

**Revitalises the Novel:** The nineteenth-century fiction with its overwhelming emphasis on realism had more or less come to a dead end. It needed revitalisation. And some fresh blood had already been injected into its veins by powerful writers like Henry James, D. H. Lawrence, Joseph Conrad and others but it remained for Hemingway to revive the dying art of the novel and give it a new lease of life.

**A New Style:** Hemingway in his apprenticeship as a journalist had learnt to be sceptical of decoration, embellishment, flowery language and metaphorical fat. He brought to fiction the colloquial style of speech to serve literary ends. His sentences were short and crisp. They were usually not qualified because when they are qualified the reader’s attention is diverted from the main clause. Therefore, in Hemingway’s early style in the Twenties one finds a sort of machine gun burst of short sentences, sometimes linked by a conjunction “and” or “but” going directly to its target. This style, in part imitation of the Bible, is an excellent medium for expressing an exact but limited truth. The language may be bleak and bane but there is poetry in it. His prose rhythms have transformed the staccato rattle into the liquid, cadenced ripple of his later works. Compare the following paragraph:

> Walking carefully, downhill, Anselmo in the lead, Agustin next, Robert Jordan placing his feet carefully so that he would not slip, feeling the dead pine needles under his rope-soled shoes, bumping a tree root with one foot and putting a hand forward and feeling the cold metal jut of the automatic rifle barrel and the folded legs of the tripod, then working sideways down the hill, his shoes sliding and grooving the forest floor, putting his left hand out again and touching the rough bark of a tree trunk, then as he braced himself, his hand feeling a smooth place, the base of the palm of his hand coming away sticky from the resinous sap where a blaze had been cut, they dropped down the steep wooded hill side to the point above the bridge where Robert Jordan had Anselmo watched the first day. (For Whom the Bell Tolls)

**Two Styles Compared:** If the first passage reflects the newly forged medium to express an intense emotional response to a brutal, animalistic and chilly world the second is a specimen of grace and poise in which the author seems to have acquired a peculiar vision of the world but a vision nonetheless. His preoccupation with action is reflected in his earlier style as well as in his later style. It moves in a rhythmic pattern in which the reader’s attention is focused on the action all the time but he can afford to relax occasionally.
Unique Ability to Transmit Experience: Whether he was writing in the Twenties or in the Fifties he reflects a youthful response to light, colour, form, and atmosphere of particular places that he has visited and which he is utilizing in his novels and short stories. He remains one of the supreme masters who have the unique ability to transfer on paper what they have felt and experienced. In the last period of his life when he wrote The Old Man and the Sea he brought about a synthesis of the controlled style of the early Twenties and the relaxed style of the Thirties. In The Old Man and the Sea one can sense the austerity of the biblical style and at the same time the beauty of the world that has charmed him:

He no longer dreamed of storms, nor of women, nor of great fish, nor fights, nor contests of strength, nor of his wife. He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach. They played like young cats in the tusk and he loved them as he loved the boy. He never dreamed about the boy. He simply woke, looked out the open door at the moon and unrolled his trousers and put them on. He urinated outside the shack and then went up the road to wake the boy. He was shivering with the morning cold. But he knew he would shiver himself warm and that soon he would be rowing. (The Old Man and the Sea)

Maintains High Standards: Throughout his life he did not let his standards for the exact word, the concrete statement and his concentration on the physical world of things relax. He makes a scene so real, that we can almost smell the pine-covered slopes or the surf on a sea-beach. In A Farewell to Arms the fall is vividly depicted in Chapter 1, and the famous Caporetto retreat remains a landmark in realistic technique. Similarly, El Sardo’s last stand on the hill-top creates on the mind of the reader an impression not very different from that of a coloured movie.

A Mastery on Dialogue: To this admirable gift of his he brought another talent: the art of writing dialogue. His ear, because of its somewhat erratic training in music that he might have received from his mother, was a very sensitive device to catch the peculiarities of accents of various speakers. He also captured their speech rhythms. They are not literally transferred on to the paper but they are transformed into brilliant dialogue by the unique process of artistic transformation. He shunned all authorial comments and let the conversation convey to the reader what it stands for by itself. If an authorial comment, in Hemingway’s opinion, is needed then the writer has not visualised the scene or listened attentively to the conversation that he is putting on paper. He applied to prose the kinaesthetic test that Robert Jordan felt when he heard Maria’s story.

Pilar Among Memorable Characters: Hemingway has created some of the most memorable characters of our time. Beginning with Prick Adams who is a symbol of the twentieth-century shocked sensibility, to Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea his characters are individuals and at the same time representative of a whole generation of men and women whom they portray. Orville Prescott thinks: “It is the guerrilla chieftain’s wife, the super-woman Pilar, who alone survives in memory and who will continue to do so as long
as the bitter courage and heroic defiance of the Spanish, people in the civil war are not forgotten. Pilar is Mr. Hemingway’s only triumphant feat of characterization” On My Opinion, p. 67).

Many Memorable Characters: – One cannot agree with Orville Prescott entirely because in Leslie Fiedler’s opinion Brett Ashley (in The Sun Also Rises) is the only al female character in Hemingway’s fiction. Again, Carlos Baker thinks that Margot Macomber is a perfect representative of the predatory Anglo-American bitches and at the same time an individual. Whatever be her morality and her code of ethic she is certainly a living character and will last as long as Hemingway’s stories are read. Similarly, Manuel in “The undefeated”, not only exists as a symbol of the undefeated human spirit but also as an individual whom we see charging at the bull with a sword in his hand forgetting all the pain of a broken wrist. Even characters like Count Greffi or Dr. Valentini in A Farewell to Arms make much deeper impact upon us than what their brief appearance, in the novel warrants.

Cyclic Plots: – Hemingway’s plots are extremely simple. With the exception of For Whom the Bell Tolls in which social and political forces are introduced and, they play very important roles in the lives of the main characters, the rest of the novels have very simple plots. They depict one or two major characters, their ordeals, their disappointments and their failures and their vain or successful struggle to achieve a measure of dignity. The novels end usually at a point where they begin. Jake Barnes love for Brett Ashley cannot be consummated because of his physical injury. At the end of the novel he has gained a measure of maturity and learnt to live without love but the love still remains unconsummated. Similarly, in A Farewell to Arms one crazy lover (Catherine Barkley) at the beginning of the novel is replaced by another shocked lover (Frederic Henry). In For Whom the Bell Tolls, Maria carries the wound of having loved and lost which is as deep as the shock of rape committed by the Fascists. Robert Jordan’s attempt to blow-up the bridge, in spite of his success, is an exercise in futility because the Fascists have already known of the Republicans’ plan of launching an offensive and they have already carried their reinforcements across the bridge which Robert Jordan is supposed to destroy just before the offensive. In his last novel, The Old Man and the Sea, Santiago returns as empty-handed after three days of his ordeal on the sea as when he set out hopefully on the eighty-fifth day.

Characters Grow Up: – Carlos Baker calls the plots of Hemingway’s novels cyclic but if they were cyclic there would be no insight obtained in the course of the action depicted in the novels. It would be far better to say that the plots of his novels are spiraled rather than cyclic, because in a spiral there is a difference of level even when one comes to the starting point and it indicates the maturity of the main character, as a result of the action. The main character grows in stature in the course of the novel.

Now Becomes Eternal: – In Green Hills of Africa, Hemingway mentions that an author can attain fourth and fifth dimensions in prose if he is sincere enough and lucky too. Critics
have not reached any definite conclusion as to what he meant by the fourth and fifth dimensions. However, there is some agreement that the fourth or fifth dimension could mean the raising of “now” to the level of eternal now. By concentrating on the present and the intensity of its experience, the “now” becomes “eternal now”. And in this intensity of experience the participants share their experience with people in other times and at other places who have had or will have similar experiences. They share with these people a sort of mystical union and a sort of immortality not very unsimilar to what Robert Jordan has experienced in his love for Maria.

Fragile Affirmation: - Hemingway tried to be a realist all his life. But as time went by he moved toward some affirmation from his earlier near-nihilism and this is reflected in the deeper layers of his prose narration. He has utilized the techniques of irony, allusion, extended metaphor, symbolism, and even myth to connote meanings that are not apparent on the surface. Frederic Henry’s experience of the First World War reflects the experience of ‘the whole American nation which was betrayed by the politician. Jake Barnes’ experience as embodied in The Sun Also Rises is the experience of a whole generation—the lost generation, the American expatriates wandering aimlessly in the cities of Europe. Again, his use of rain as a symbol in A Farewell to Arms is highly suggestive. Rain in itself is no evil but the way it is associated with Henry’s misfortunes and finally. Catherine’s death it becomes a symbol of disaster, death, defeat anti decay. His use of the hyena and the vulture as symbols for artistic betrayal in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” suggests a new dimension in his art. Even a short scene in A Farewell to Arms, in which Frederic Henry empties his glass on a burning log of wood so that he may have his whisky and by this action kill hundreds of ants prematurely, even though they were born to die, becomes a symbol of man’s fate in a deterministic universe. There is “no exist” for any of us but we all try to make our little contributions to the welfare of the, human race. That is why one should not ask for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.-

His Vision of Nada: - More than all these, Hemingway is one of the supreme spokesmen of the twentieth-century man. His vision of Nada—nothingness—penetrates to the depth of the existential dilemma that man faces today. Man is lonely, and he has seen that the world is purposeless and that there is no meaning beyond what meaning man gives to his life. Action is to be performed for its own sake and it is its own justification. There are no gods or superhuman agencies that will support man in an hour of crisis. If man is to live meaningfully, he must evolve a code for himself based upon the empirical evidence of his senses. There is no life beyond the grave and therefore one must realise one’s identity in this life on earth. It is the picture of a solitary man in an indifferent universe that Hemingway seems to project in his novels and short stories. Jordan, in the last scene of For Whom the Bell Tolls is a symbol of “the lonely rebel” whose despair is unrelieved by any hope. Love, drink, religion, community life—all are no good. It is a stark and bare statement of a stark and bare truth; and it is not easy to be reconciled to this vision of nothingness and meaninglessness. One can
occasionally seek comfort in fishing or love-making or drinking or the company of friends but man is basically alone. But Hemingway is no nihilist for his is an art of affirmation.

**Affirmation in Art:** It is his devotion to art that ultimately redeems him from nihilism. It is his craft that gives him the scope for creativity and his sense of identity. It is an art that he wants to practice without fakery and without tricks. He wants it to be the religion of a creative artist and it will give him the justification for his life. Similarly, even, when the winner takes nothing he attains dignity in the manner of his losing like Robert Jordan. This is where the matador, the artist, and the ordinary man become one: and one can face life as the matador does in the bull-ring.

**High Quality Art:** Hemingway has not written much and the impact that he has made on the reading public is far too great as compared to the volume of his work. But they are chiselled jewels and in the service of his art he has spared no pains and in spite of the limitations that Earl Rovit mentions he has achieved almost a permanent place in the history of the twentieth-century novel.

**Hemingway’s Concept of Physical defeat and Moral Success**

**Life Seen As Struggle:** Hemingway achieved maturity as a man during the First World War in which he had been wounded seriously. As a result of this unfortunate occurrence his vision of life became coloured because in those impressionable years he had seen life from very close quarters and he had discovered that violence was one of the real and rude facts of life, the most important, in fact. He saw life as a struggle in which man has no choice except to fight—sometimes literally and quite often metaphorically. Paolini, an Italian critic, commenting on this aspect of Hemingway’s art says:

Here (in Hemingway’s works) the inner motive is precisely that antithesis between professionalism and dilettantism, interpreting these two opposing concepts in their broadest and universal sense. For the Hemingway man to belong to the category of ‘professionals’ implies a choice—either by instinct or as a result of a series of experiences; it means he has taken up a solid strategic position in life-war which by its very nature can no longer be stormed by the enemy or engulfed in the abyss of nada. The choice determines whether life is worth living and fighting for or is ‘a nothing and then nothing and then nothing’. Hence the dilettante is a failure; he has failed in his duty, in the true categorical imperative of the conscience; he has wasted his talents and energies. The other category is that of the undefeated; the winner, even when they win nothing, even when they seem to be routed. It is in these that Hemingway solves the dilemma of ‘to be or not to be’, in which the ‘nonbeing’, probably deriving from the mysticism of the Slav writers, is both an obstacle and a calamity to being.
Jordan is Ideologically Confused: – Jordan in For Whom the Bell Tolls is a typical Hemingway hero and he suffers from some of the same nightmares as Nick Adams. In his early childhood he had seen a Negro being lynched and this human degradation haunts him even now. In Spain, he sees similar atrocities committed by man, whether it be Maria’s tale or Pablo’s exploits. He has made his choice to fight for the Republic in order to safeguard the interests of man, anywhere in the world. In his opinion Fascism constitutes a potential danger to the rights of man and he does not mind laying down his life for the Republic. But as has been made obvious beyond doubt he is not sure of his commitment: he is perhaps still trying to justify his choice. In his moments of doubt he prefers to either dull his senses by liquor, or escape from the necessity of thinking in the arms of Maria. He confesses that he has kept thinking in abeyance for the duration of the war. After the war has been won he will, he thinks, form his judgments. He is as confused as Henry in A Farewell to Arms with the only difference that he has accepted the illusion of a cause which Henry had rejected. At the end of the novel he is merely an individual fighting to protect his beloved whom he has raised to the level of a symbol for Spain.

Life is Defeated: – However, this should not blind us to the realities of life as they are presented in the novel. Due to the treachery of Pablo and Pilar’s lack of vigilance he loses his vital equipment, a fact which makes human sacrifices a necessity. He loses a true Christian like Anselmo whose life could have been saved. On his instructions El Sardo goes to steal horses and due to the unseasonal snow he is traced to his hide-out and eventually wiped out by the Fascist planes. The gypsies who do not understand the causes of the war and the motives of Jordan’s sacrifice escape. Jordan also is eventually overtaken by death; and he lies on the floor of the forest waiting for his end. All this bloodshed is rendered, unless for the Fascists have learnt of the attack and they have made the necessary preparations to meet the attack. Jordan’s attempt to get in touch with General Golz reveals on the one hand inefficiency in the Loyalist ranks and on the other the futility of the attempt. Andres Marty thinks that by being given the task of delivering the dispatch he has been given a reprieve because all the guerrillas are so depressed by what they have seen of the war that they are convinced that their cause is lost forever. They are symbol of the desperation that has eaten into their entrails. Pablo is not an exception because El Sardo knows equally well how dangerous Jordan’s plan is: and Pablo tries to oppose him because he is more than ever convinced that the time to make a move from the Guadarrama Mountains has not come as yet. Agustin is bored with his stay in the hills and he wants action for the sake of action. He lacks the education which is necessary for a cause to succeed. Pilar knows from the moment she has seen Jordan’s hand that Jordan is bound to die. With the smell of death being so strong in the air, it is quite clear that the forces of life are defeated.

Ideologies Translated Into Physical Combat: – Having reduced the opposing forces to a physical combat Hemingway gives the hero enough courage and daring and resolution to enable him to last somehow until the end. Jordan avoids carefully any conflict with Pablo so as not to endanger the success of his mission. Even during the period when the Fascist
cavalry are almost knocking at the door of Pablo’s hide-out, Jordan thinks of escaping from there with his explosives. He does not want to fight. He does not let anybody go to help El Sardo in his last fight. He prepares himself for the final effort to blow up the bridge which, as we come to know, does not remain such a necessity. He does it out of a false sense of duty to the Republic and against his better judgment.

**Mere Action Replaces a Clear Vision:** Hemingway poses the problem of politics but sees no way out. Not that a novelist is compelled to give solutions of the problems that he has posed but in terms of the characters in the story he is under obligation to delineate clearly what their thinking implies. Hemingway at the crucial moment brusquely brushes the vital issues aside and makes the hero take part in action which is breath-taking of course, but it is a literature of evasion. Action must lead to some ‘results, inevitably, but in Hemingway action becomes a substitute for a clear vision of life. It is here, the charge levelled by some critics that the Hemingway hero is incapable of thinking, finds its support.

**Jordan Does His Part Well:** As Paolini points out the hero in For Whom the Bell Tolls belongs to the category of “Professionals”. He is like Manuel in “The Undefeated” who must perform his duty and whether he lives or dies becomes immaterial. Similarly other values also lose their glamour and charm. He is not after gains, for the real satisfaction must come, in the last analysis, from within. Man must overcome pessimism and find “his own unit of measurement”. Jordan finds his measurement in his satisfaction that he has done his little bit as this is all he could do.

**Action Solves No Ethical Problems:** As a matter of fact, war solves no ethical problems which Hemingway’s work invariably raises. For the Hemingway hero death becomes an easy solution of the intricate problem of living. Kashkin, a Russian critic, argues that For Whom the Bell Tolls champions “the invigorating and inspiring role of work”, but he forgets due to his cultural background and political commitment that work, or action in itself cannot be justified. Work in order to be psychologically satisfying must be a result of inner motivation and not a necessity to deaden one’s inner questioning.

**Contradictions in Jordan’s Thinking:** Jordan has tried to submerge his individuality in the Loyalist cause but it is very doubtful whether he succeeded, for the Hemingway “hero is usually a great individualist. He has learnt from Karkov, the, Russian journalist, that political conviction is essential for any meaningful partisan activity; he has accepted communist discipline for the duration of the war because it is the best, and the communists alone offer the programme that he can accept, and yet he upholds the guiding principles of the American constitution, like equality, liberty, fraternity, and the pursuit of happiness. The Red ideology tells him that there is no such thing as love, and Jordan has experienced genuine love. He has seen what the Loyalist discipline is like and still he fights for these people.
A Sense of Futility Haunts: It is true that in For Whom the Bell Tolls the irresponsibility of the "Lost Generation" is superseded by heroism and a sense of duty and a commitment to the human race yet if this were so in any real sense the futility that overwhelms the hero and the reader would not have been there. The final gloom is absolutely unrelieved: the human cause is lost forever on the Spanish soil. Franco’s rule in Spain was a testimony to the author’s vision of the Loyalist cause having been lost for practically all times to come. Even such a strong supporter as Kashkin of the philosophy of action and the solidarity of the human race cannot but admit the futility of the hero’s action:

He dies not only for Spain, not only to save the girt Maria whom he loves, but also for his own sake and in fulfilment of a moral duty. Jordan knows that to live properly is impossible without 'going where you have to go and doing what you have to do.' So his only reward is the consciousness of duty done. And again ‘Winner Takes Nothing’.

At Best Wins Moral Victories: It seems Hemingway had found something to die for and he seems to imply that if you die as Anselmo or Jordan died, then physical death means nothing. You may ask as you breathe your last: “Death, where is thy sting?” But this vision faded in the next decade because this commitment to mankind is absent from the next two novels he wrote. They deal with individual problems of the heroes and Hemingway seems to have retreated from his social commitment if it meant the solidarity of all the working people of the world. However, the artist’s role remains to understand and present, which he did admirably. That is what makes his hero a limited achievement because his victories, at last, remain moral ones.

“He did not wish to write a political novel, but one in which political events should form the setting for a timeless story of personal tragedy.” Discuss this statement with reference to For Whom the Bell Tolls.

A Human Document: Leicester Hemingway records in My Brother, Ernest Hemingway “The early spring of 1938, Ernest worked intensely while he was in Key West, revising The Fifth Column and thinking beyond it, he began to feel that there must be a great novel buried in the treachery, courage, and sacrifice that he had seen during recent months in Spain.” Of course Hemingway’s personal sympathies were with the Loyalists yet what impressed him more than the struggle of the Spanish people for a decent life was “the treachery, courage, and sacrifice that he had seen in Spain.”

The fact that this happened in Spain is incidental: what is more significant is that these traits are human traits and will be found anywhere in the world. In this respect For Whom the Bell Tolls is not purely a political novel: it is basically a human document which praises what is good in man and condemns, though with a deep understanding, what is evil.
Focus on One Minor Event: Hemingway has chosen to write not of the Spanish Civil War in its entirety but of a minor incident in the war. Although the story extends beyond the Guadarrama Mountains due to what the hero learns of some other events from other characters, yet what we are shown is confined to the action that takes place in the vicinity of the bridge. Jordan’s arrival in the company of Anselmo, the split in the band due to Pablo’s decision not to participate in the blowing up of the bridge, Jordan’s love-making, El Sardo’s willingness to help and his destruction by the Fascist planes, Pablo’s treachery and his eventual return to the band, and finally the destruction of the bridge and Jordan’s death—these are the key events. The flash-back scenes take us to Madrid and Hotel Gaylord’s where the Russians are staying, Pablo’s home town where he destroyed the Fascists, Maria’s home town where her father and mother were killed and she herself was raped, the dynamiting of the Fascist train by Kashkin and Maria’s rescue. The only action which takes place away from the bridge is Andres Marty’s journey to the head-quarters of General Golz. The Spanish Civil War was a complex affair, as we are told by a number of intellectuals including George Orwell in his Homage to Catalonia; therefore, it would be naive to believe that the war was confined to the hills near Segovia: nor are there any political discussions in the novel which highlight the issues involved. What we are told is the experience of a young American volunteer during his three-day stay in the hide-out of a guerrilla leader. And this does not qualify it as a political novel.

A Fruitless Action: The political events and discussions, if any, are no more than a backdrop against which a personal drama is enacted. It is a tragic story of the failure of an individual who is swayed by idealism, and his strong common sense—one could call it his pragmatism—creates a conflict in his mind whether what he is doing is worth doing. He suppresses his doubts and persuades an indifferent band of guerrillas to help him to destroy a vital bridge so that the Fascist reinforcements may not reach the pass which Golz is attacking. On a purely personal plane one could argue that Jordan’s effort is highly admirable but he knows as well as any one else that what he is doing and at such a heavy price is fruitless. The Fascist reinforcements have been carried across the bridge already; they have known before-hand of the attack and they are a disciplined army. On the other hand Fernando informs Jordan that he learnt in Segovia that the Loyalists were going to launch an offensive in the vicinity of Segovia and that it was an open secret. The loose tongues of the Loyalists have been the cause of their ruin. At best, one could say that the events narrated here are representative of what went on elsewhere in Spain but it is not the whole truth about the Spanish Civil War or the political situation in Spain.

Jordan’s Sole Purpose: As a personal story of an individual it is admirable. When Golz tells Jordan: “I do not like to ask people to do such things and in such a way. I could not order you to do it. I understand what you may be forced to do through my putting such conditions” Jordan promises that whatever be the difficulties he will blow up the bridge on time. Having seen how the guerrilla morale stood in Pablo’s band he cleverly wins over the loyalty of Pilar and the other guerrillas and he thus isolates. Pablo. When El Sardo’s band
has been wiped out by the Fascists his devotion to duty compels Pilar to take on some of the responsibilities of “the very select” offensive that Jordan is planning to launch against the Fascist posts on both sides of the bridge. He loves the good things of life but he will not let them interfere in his work. Pilar very aptly remarks: “You are a very cold boy.” Before he becomes committed to Maria he declares: “I have not found one [woman] that moved me as they say they should move you.” And when it has become obvious to him that due to the absence of the exploder and the fuse the assignment might prove fatal to him he is prepared to carry out his job, even though he would have liked to live, and for a long time, with Maria. Love is one of the good things of life but he rejects it in favour of his duty to the Republic which he equates with “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness”. When it is a question of duty even Maria, whom he loves more than his life, has no place in his life. He tolerates Pablo, a murderer, and is not too critical of him. He is useful to the Republic even though he is highly debased, therefore, he may be allowed to live. He is ready to exploit the guerrillas for his own purpose but once the bridge has been blown up he sacrifices his own life so that they may escape to safety. He does not like to murder men but he kills the Fascist cavalryman who threatens to invade their privacy and thus spoil the chances of his successfully blowing up the bridge. He shoots the Fascist guard on the bridge because it is essential. He orders Anselmo to kill because knowing Anselmo’s Christian character he makes sure that he does not falter and thus endanger the success of the operation. He is an intellectual and still he suspends his thinking for the duration of the war because too much preoccupation with unnecessary thought might hamper him in his work. Such a devotion to duty (to the solidarity of Man) borders on fanaticism but it is admirable in a partisan who, even though an American, is fighting for the Spanish people.

Hemingway Writes of the End: — Jordan represents certain aspects of Hemingway’s character and thus in Jordan he expresses some of his own fears and hopes. Kashkin, the Russian authority on Hemingway, remarks that in the middle years (1928–38) his activity “was the purposeless activity of a man vainly attempting not to think, that his courage was the courage of despair, that the obsession of death was taking hold of him, that again and again he was writing of the end—the end of love, the end of life, the end of hope, the end of all.”

As An Elegy: — In Jordan’s courage, critics have detected an element of, despair. The picture of the world that Hemingway delineates in For Whom the Bell Tolls is that of “a fatalistic world”. “Not an epic of the war, nor even the story of Robert Jordan’s education in the war, but almost an elegy sung in praise of the lonely rebel, serving in a foreign country with a foreign army, though now with the illusion of a cause; a lost man whom the war overwhelms without changing him. In the face of this central feeling of the impossibility of belief, the Marxist ideal, can only be the opium of the people, an austere facade hiding deceit.” The book is a monument to the confused thinking of a man who really belongs to “no-man’s party”.

Prepared by Atta Ur RahmanJadoon 03335499069
Jordan is Lost but Perseveres: – There are four distinct stages in the novel when Jordan is, compelled to think that the cause he is espousing is lost irredeemably. On his arrival Pablo’s initial hostility, which he later on successfully conceals, is the first indication of what he might expect in this oasis. El Sardo’s destruction should have made any man wiser but Jordan persists. He also has learnt that the Fascists know of the attack and they have made preparation for the attack but he continues to harp on the theme of his choice. Finally, Pablo’s treachery and Pilar’s lapse arouse his ingenuity and out of sheer desperation he decides to use hand-grenades in place of the fuse and detonators. All through his three-day stay in this hide-out with the exception of the love of Maria and Pilar’s unquestioned loyalty to him he meets nothing that could cheer up his spirits. The novel is concerned with what happens between “two supine postures” — Jordan lying on the floor of the forest in the beginning of the novel, and then at the end of the novel. Nemi D’Agostino remarks

The utter uselessness of the attempt on the bridge, upon which the future of the human race might depend, is made clear from the start, as is the uselessness of the pathetic heroism of that group of solitary eccentrics which Hemingway selects as his chief characters. The sky overhanging the sierra is without depth and beyond the mountains there is no crusade but only the confused movements of heterogeneous crowds, a massacre iii a betrayed land. Jordan is a new Frederic Henry, who finds a code of behaviour by which to endure life in the exact fulfilment of his mission, and in the end is driven to 'sacrifice' more by desperation than by any certainty. His drama is too oppressive and restricted to reflect the so much wider and more complex tragedy of Spain. There is too much disenchantment with Jordan’s idealism in the novel.

Borders on Melodrama: – For this very reason the heroics produce an effect not very different from melodrama. But for the sure touch of the novelist the tragedy of Jordan could have become an actual melodrama and the bathos of his death could have degenerated into pathos. The presence of such heroic figure as Joaquin, El Sardo and Anselmo redeem the novel and the author from absurdity. But for Anselmo’s true sentiment and El Sardo’s true heroism the book would not have been what it is.

Irony Saves the Novel: – Last but not the least, For Whom the Bell Tolls cannot be a partisan novel because of the extensive use of irony in the novel. Some critics feel that it goes against the main drift of the novel. Hemingway who supported the Loyalist cause in the Spanish Civil War could not shut his eyes to the realities of the Spanish life. He remains an artist first and foremost: therefore, he could not be a partisan as a novelist. Lieutenant Berrendo is portrayed with sympathy and understanding, even though he is fighting against the Loyalists. The Fascist discipline is shown superior to the commitment of the Loyalist supporters; and the fact that they are irregular gypsies hardly mitigates the adverse criticism.
Remains an Imperfect Novelist: – Lincoln Kirste in his article on Hemingway, “The Canon of Death”, writes: Hemingway is an incomplete tragic artist whose wilful limits, as yet exclude him from the company of creators of living characters, but they have the signatures of his choice attached, and he had personally endowed them with their characteristics. They do not exist independent of his approval, as do Anna Karenina, Starbuck, or Leopold Bloom. Convinced and a master of a physical world as he now is, can he dare to acquire a knowledge of the others?
EUGENE O’NEILL; 1888-1953

Eugene O’Neill (1888–1953) was the son of an actor whose work meant that the family led a difficult life on the road. O’Neill would later deeply resent his insecure childhood, pinning the family’s many problems, including his mother’s drug addiction, on his father. Educated at boarding schools, O’Neill gained admission to Princeton University but left after only one year to go to sea. He spent his early twenties living on the docks of Buenos Aires, Liverpool, and New York, sinking into an alcoholism that brought him to the point of suicide. Slowly O’Neill recovered from his addiction and took a job writing for a newspaper. A bout of tuberculosis left him incapacitated and he was consigned to a sanitarium for six months. While in recovery, O’Neill decided to become a playwright.

O’Neill wrote his first play, Bound East for Cardiff, in 1916, premiering it with a company in Provincetown, MA that took it to New York that same year. In 1920, O’Neill’s breakthrough came with his play Beyond the Horizon. Historians of drama identify its premiere as a pivotal event on the Broadway stage, one that brought a new form of tragic realism to an industry almost entirely overrun with stock melodramas and shallow farces. O’Neill went on to write over twenty innovative plays in the next twenty years, to steadily growing acclaim. The more famous works from his early period include The Great God Brown (1926), a study in the conflicts between idealism and materialism, and Strange Interlude (1928), an ambitious 36-hour saga on the plight of the Everywoman. His late career brought such works as his masterpiece, The Iceman Cometh (1946), an Ibsenian portrait of man’s hold on his pipe dreams, and A Long Day’s Journey into Night (1956), the posthumously published and painfully autobiographical tragedy of a family haunted by a mother’s drug addiction.

O’Neill wrote morality plays and experimented with the tragic form. O’Neill's interest in tragedy began as early as 1924 with his Desire Under the Elms, a tale of incest, infanticide, and fateful retribution, but would come to maturity with his monumental revision of Aeschylus's Oresteia, Mourning Becomes Electra (1931). O'Neill chose Electra because he felt that her tale had been left incomplete. More generally, as his diary notes indicate, O'Neill understood his exercises in tragedy as an attempt to find a modern analogue to an ancient mode of experience. Thus Mourning aims to provide a "modern psychological approximation of the Greek sense of fate" in a time in which the notion of an inescapable and fundamentally non-redemptive determinism is incomprehensible. Accordingly, the setting of the trilogy, the American Civil War, springs from O'Neill's attempt to negotiate the chasm between ancient and modern. For O'Neill, the Civil War provided a setting that would allow audiences to locate the tragic in their national history and mythology while retaining enough distance in time to lend the tale its required epic proportions. Mourning also provided O'Neill with an occasion to abandon the complex set
design of the Art Theater, which he had long bemoaned as a constraint on the playwright's creative freedom.
Introduction to Mourning Becomes Electra

Greek Sources

The title of the play suggests its relation to the Greek drama. The story of the house of Atreus was set down by Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and diverse other Greek writers whose works are not extant. From this house shadowed by an ancient curse, Agamemnon, brother of Menelaus, goes forth to the war at Troy.

His wife, Clytemnestra, the sister of Helen, during her husband’s absence takes for her paramour Aegisthus and shares the government of Argos with him. In due time Agamemnon, having at the God’s behest sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia and bringing with him Cassandra, Priam’s daughter, returns and is murdered by Clytemnestra and her lover. Electra, her daughter, is shamed and degraded and prays for the return of her brother Orestes, long ago sent out of the country by his mother and now become a man. Orestes returns, kills Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. He is pursued by the Erinyes, and only after wandering and agony and a vindication of himself before the tribunal of Athena’s Areopagus is he cleansed of his sin.

Narrative Pattern

Mourning Becomes Electra begins with the mother and daughter, Christine and Lavinia, waiting there in the house of the Mannons, the return of Ezra Mannon from the war, which with Lee’s surrender is about over. A thread of romance is introduced between. Lavinia and Peter, and between Lavinia’s brother, Orin and Hazel, Peter’s sister. Meanwhile, Captain Adam Brant comes to call; he pays a certain court to Lavinia, and she, acting on a cue from the hired man, who has been on the place sixty years, traps him into admitting that he is the son of one of the Mannons who had seduced a Canadian maid servant and been driven from home by his father, Lavinia’s grandfather. She has all her data straight now. She has suspected her mother, followed her to New York, where Christine has pretended to go because of her own father’s illness, but has in fact been meeting Adam. Lavinia has written to her father and to her brother, hinting at the town gossip about her mother. We learn that Adam had returned to avenge his mother but instead had fallen passionately in love with Christine, who loves him as passionately as she hates her husband. From this point the play moves on, with the father’s hatred of the son, who returns it, the son’s adoration of his mother, the daughter’s and the mother’s antagonism, the daughter’s and father’s devotion, to Christine’s murder of her husband with the poison sent by Adam and substituted for the medicine prescribed against his heart trouble. Orin returns, after an illness from a wound in the head. Christine tries to protect herself in her son’s mind against the plots of Lavinia. Lavinia, in the room where her father’s body lies, convinces, him with the facts; they trail Christine to Adam’s ship, where she has gone to warn him against Orin. Orin shoots Adam. Christine next day kills herself. Brother and sister take a long voyage to China, stop at the Southern Isles, and come home again. Substitutions have taken place, Lavinia has grown like her Mother, Orin more like his father. Meanwhile, his old affair with Hazel,
encouraged at last by Lavinia, who now wants to marry Peter, is cancelled he finds himself making an incestuous proposal to Lavinia and is repulsed by her. He shoots himself. In the end, Lavinia, speaking words of love to Peter, finds Adam's name on her lips. She breaks with Peter, orders the blinds of her house nailed shut, and goes into the house, to live there till her death. Justice has been done, the Mannon dead will be there and she will be there.

Parallel Characters

It is now obvious that the American dramatist, as the Greek did, used a well known outline which he could fill in to his purpose. Obviously, too, Ezra Mannon is Agamemnon, Captain Brant is Aegisthus, Christine Clytemnestra, Lavinia Electra, and Orin Orestes. But to dismiss the matter by saying that O'Neill has merely repeated the classic story in modern terms is off the track. Let it go at that and you will miss even the really classic element in the play and get only the Greek side of it that is self-evident and that would be easy for any dramatist to imitate.

Departures From the Greek Play

The story itself follows the Greeks up to the middle of the third division of the play, and here the incest motive, the death of Orin and the transference of the whole situation and the dramatic conclusion from the mother to the sister depart from Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Adam’s relation to the family adds to the role of the lover the motif of a blood relationship. The old hired man, the confidant, parallels to some extent a Greek device, familiar to us in countless plays. The townspeople and workmen are now and again a kind of chorus. Many of the shadings and themes are from the older plays; for a good example, the servant’s line in Aeschylus about the dead killing one who lives, which underlies one of the new play’s main themes. The death of the lover, as in Aeschylus and Euripides, not as in Sophocles, comes before that of the mother, which throws the stress where the O'Neill play needs it. The division of the play into three parts is, of course, like the trilogy of the Greek dramatist. On the other hand, the dividing line is much less distinct in Mourning Becomes Electra; the final curtain of the first part, for example falls, it is true, on Mannon’s death, as in Aeschylus it does on Agamemnon’s, but there is not the same effect of totality because of the stress put on Lavinia; in Agamemnon Electra does not even appear.

Magnificent Theme

The magnificent theme that there is something in the dead that we cannot placate falsely is there in the Greek plays and in, the O'Neill play as well. The end of the play is by imaginative insight Greek in spirit Lavinia goes into the house, the blinds are closed for ever, the stage is silent, the doors shut, the exaltation is there, the completion, the tragic certainty.
The Homecoming

It is late spring afternoon in front of the Mannon house. The master of the house, Brigadier-General Ezra Mannon, is soon to return from war.

Lavinia, Ezra's severe daughter, has just come, like her mother Christine, from a trip to New York. Seth, the gardener, takes the anguished girl aside. He needs to warn her against her would-be beau, Captain Brant. Before Seth can continue, however, Lavinia's suitor Peter and his sister Hazel, arrive. Lavinia stiffens. If Peter is proposing to her again, he must realize that she cannot marry anyone because Father needs her.

Lavinia asks Seth to resume his story. Seth asks if she has not noticed that Brant looks just like her all the other male Mannons. He believes that Brant is the child of David Mannon and Marie Brantôme, a Canuck nurse, a couple expelled from the house for fear of public disgrace.

Suddenly Brant himself enters from the drive. Calculatingly Lavinia derides the memory of Brant's mother. Brant explodes and reveals his heritage. Lavinia's grandfather loved his mother and jealously cast his brother out of the family. Brant has sworn vengeance.

A moment later, Lavinia appears inside her father's study. Christine enters indignantly, wondering why Lavinia has summoned her. Lavinia reveals that she followed her to New York and saw her kissing Brant. Christine defiantly tells Lavinia that she has long hated Ezra and that Lavinia was born of her disgust. She loves her brother Orin because he always seemed hers alone.

Lavinia coldly explains that she intends to keep her mother's secret for Ezra's sake. Christine must only promise to never see Brant again. Laughingly Christine accuses her daughter of wanting Brant herself. Lavinia has always schemed to steal her place. Christine agrees to Lavinia's terms. Later she proposes to Brant that they poison Ezra and attribute his death to his heart trouble.

One week later, Lavinia stands stiffly at the top of the front stairs with Christine. Suddenly Ezra enters and stops stiffly before his house. Lavinia rushes forward and embraces him.

Once she and Ezra alone, Christine assures her that he has nothing to suspect with regards to Brant. Ezra impulsively kisses her hand. The war has made him realize that they must overcome the wall between them. Calculatingly Christine assures him that all is well. They kiss.

Toward daybreak in Ezra's bedroom, Christine slips out from the bed. Mannon's bitterly rebukes her. He knows the house is not his and that Christine awaits his death to be free. Christine deliberately taunts that she has indeed become Brant's mistress. Mannon
rises in fury, threatening her murder, and then falls back in agony, begging for his medicine. Christine retrieves a box from her room and gives him the poison.

Mannon realizes her treachery and calls Lavinia for help. Lavinia rushes to her father. With his dying effort, Ezra indicts his wife: "She's guilty—not medicine!" he gasps and then dies. Her strength gone, Christine collapses in a faint.

**The Hunted**

Peter, Lavinia, and Orin arrive at the house. Orin disappointedly complains of Christine's absence. He jealously asks Lavinia about what she wrote him regarding Brant. Lavinia warns him against believing Christine's lies.

Suddenly Christine hurries out, reproaching Peter for leaving Orin alone. Mother and son embrace jubilantly. Suspiciously Orin asks Christine about Brant. Christine explains that Lavinia has gone mad and begun to accuse her of the impossible. Orin sits at Christine's feet and recounts his wonderful dreams about her and the South Sea Islands. The Islands represented all the war was not: peace, warmth, and security, or Christina herself. Lavinia reappears and coldly calls Orin to see their father's body.

In the study, Orin tells Lavinia that Christine has already warned him of her madness. Calculatingly Lavinia insists that Orin certainly cannot let their mother's paramour escape. She proposes that they watch Christine until she goes to meet Brant herself. Orin agrees.

The night after Ezra's funeral, Brant's clipper ship appears at a wharf in East Boston. Christine meets Brant on the deck, and they retire to the cabin to speak in private. Lavinia and an enraged Orin listen from the deck. The lovers decide to flee east and seek out their Blessed Islands. Fearing the hour, they painfully bid each other farewell. When Brant returns, Orin shoots him and ransacks the room to make it seem that Brant has been robbed.

The following night Christine paces the drive before the Mannon house. Orin and Lavinia appear, revealing that they killed Brant. Christine collapses. Orin knees beside her pleadingly, promising that he will make her happy, that they can leave Lavinia at home and go abroad together. Lavinia orders Orin into the house. He obeys.

Christine glares at her daughter with savage hatred and marches into the house. Lavinia determinedly turns her back on the house, standing like a sentinel. A shot is heard from Ezra's study. Lavinia stammers: "It is justice!"

**The Haunted**
A year later, Lavinia and Orin return from their trip East. Lavinia's body has lost its military stiffness and she resembles her mother perfectly. Orin has grown dreadfully thin and bears the statue-like attitude of his father.

In the sitting room, Orin grimly remarks that Lavinia's has stolen Christine's soul. Death has set her free to become her. Peter enters from the rear and gasps, thinking he has seen Christine's ghost. Lavinia approaches him eagerly. Orin jealously mocks his sister, accusing her of becoming a true romantic during their time in the Islands.

A month later, Orin works intently at a manuscript in the Mannon study. Lavinia knocks sharply at the locked door. With forced casualness, she asks Peter what he is doing. Orin insists that they must atone for Mother's death. As the last male Mannon, he has written a history of the family crimes, from Abe's onward. Lavinia is the most interesting criminal of all. She only became pretty like Mother on Brant's Islands, with the natives staring at her with desire.

When Orin accuses her of sleeping with one of them, she assumes Christine's taunting voice. Reacting like Ezra, Orin grasps his sister's throat, threatening her murder. He has taken Father's place and she Mother's.

A moment later, Hazel and Peter appear in the sitting room. Orin enters, insisting that he see Hazel alone. He gives her a sealed envelope, enjoining her to keep it safe from his sister. She should only open it if something happens to him or if Lavinia tries to marry Peter. Lavinia enters from the hall. Hazel moves to leave, trying to keep Orin's envelope hidden behind her back. Rushing to Orin, Lavinia beseeches him to make her surrender it. Orin complies.

Orin tells his sister she can never see Peter again. A "distorted look of desire" comes into his face. Lavinia stares at him in horror, saying, "For God's sake—! No! You're insane! You can't mean—!" Lavinia wishes his death. Startled, Orin realizes that his death would be another act of justice. Mother is speaking through Lavinia.

Peter appears in the doorway. Unnaturally casual, Orin remarks that he was about to go clean his pistol and exits. Lavinia throws herself into Peter's arms. A muffled shot is heard.

Three days later, Lavinia appears dressed in deep mourning. A resolute Hazel arrives and insists that Lavinia not marry Peter. The Mannon secrets will prevent their happiness. She already has told Peter of Orin's envelope.

Peter arrives, and the pair pledges their love anew. Started by the bitterness in his voice, Lavinia desperately flings herself into his arms crying, "Take me, Adam!" Horrified, Lavinia orders Peter home.
Lavinia cackles that she is bound to the Mannon dead. Since there is no one left to punish her, she must punish herself—she must entomb herself in the house with the ancestors.

**Critical Appreciation of ‘Mourning Becomes Electra’**

Eugene O’Neill[1885-1953], a dramatist of USA could not keep pace with the progress in other branches of literature. Upto 18th century the puritan prejudice in the USA playwright was neglected if the play was poor. The people’s need for drama was satisfied often by imported stuff.

At the end of 19th century English drama came to end. Standards of the drama had also fallen. By the next decade playwrights became increasingly aware of the richness of the American sense.

The American theater in the 1920’s experimented in many different ways. Expressionism was also brought to America from Europe. The artists tried to depict state of mind and psychological condition. Due to the expressionism American theatrical spirit grew.

O’Neill’s Contribution to Drama

O’Neill was genius. He brought change in American drama depiction. He used realism and expressionism. He did bold experiment. He used naturalistic details with symbolist mood, suggestiveness that was known only on the Greek stage where an Aeschylean triology kept the people spellbound for hours. John Gassner says-

“The stature of Eugene O’Neill casts a long shadow on the American theater whether it stretches or contracts in the critical estimates of a particular period or critic, this much is certain: the height and breadth of the American theater is measured by it. Find fault with O’Neill and you find fault with O’Neill and you find fault with the entire American stage, find merit in him and you find worth in this striving or straining toward significant drama.”

In order to communicate inner reality O’Neill used expressionistic techniques. He used poetic devices as aside, soliloquy. He used poetic devices as aside, soliloquy, masks, etc. With the same end in view. He used myth and restored to epic dimesions in order to convey the sense of over-hanging fate driving men to their doom, eg, Mourning Becomes Electra. O'Neill uses symbolism to communicate.

In ‘Mourning Becomes Electra’, O’Neill has used myth and legend as symbols to give a broad and universal significance to his theme. In this play he used the Electra legend to achieve an approximation to the Greek sense of fate, such as would appeal to modern audiences. O’Neill writes- ‘Not masks for all plays, naturally. Obviously not for plays conceived in purely realistic terms.’ His symbolism is quiet near to realism.
O'Neill grew a lovely Pastureland in the barren land of American literature. Drama was the weaker side of America. Until the first world war no worthwhile play was written in the USA Eugene O'Neill was the beginner in drama. Before him, force, comedy and melodrama were written. No greatly moving and powerful play was written. O’Neill wrote moving and powerful tragedies. His famous plays are ‘The Hairy Ape’, ‘The Emperor Jones’ and ‘Mourning Becomes Electra’.

O’Neill violated “The sacred rights of the play-goer to discharge his obligations to the stage in two hours and a half of theatre attendance” His play were very lengthy. His play had epic dimensions. Through lengthy plays O’Neill brought a spaciousness that was only on the Greek stage where an Aeschylean trilogy kept the people spell bound for hours.

John Gassner, “the height and breath of the American theatre... Find fault with O’Neill and you find fault with the entire American stage; find in him and you find worth in striving or straining towards significant drama. It is possible to single out American playwright endowed with greater refinement and facility than can be attributed to him but none who made a comparable impression on the twentieth century. Chiefly as a result of his persistent efforts after 1918, the American drama actually entered the century and made contribution to world theatre that could be considered significantly modern.”

O'Neill, like T.S. Eliot, went to the Greek for inspiration. He said,- “tragedy, I think, has the meaning the Greeks gave it. “Like the Greek tragedy writers like Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides he saw humanity tortured and tormented in anguish. O'Neill's plays also have serious moral purposes like, Greek plays. Like Greek plays O'Neill plays also have serious moral purpose. He also has a modern equivalent of the Greek concept of fate or Gods. O'Neill studied Freud and Jung which made him discover the unconscious. In the Greek drama the struggle used to be between man and God; in the plays of O'Neill the struggle is now with himself, man’s own past and future. To him God, Fate, Mystery are all aspects of the sub-conscious. O'Neill’s tragic heroes are the modern equivalent of the Gods. Pride is responsible for their tragedy.

O'Neill brought back to life many conventions of Greek drama; like the chorus, the aside and the trilogy Mourning Becomes Electra is an American version of the Greek trilogy of the murder of Agamemnon, the death of Clytemnestra and the result that follows. O'Neill has adopted the Greek story to the necessity of American setting. The Trojan War and Agamemnon is General Ezra Mannon. Christine Mannon is Clytemnestra Electra is Lavinia, Orestes is Orin Aegisthis is captain Brant like Eliot in murder in the cathedral O'Neill is also greatly fascinated by the Greek dramatists and their techniques.

“The Electra complex derives from the 5th century Electra, who plotted matricidal revenge with Orestes, her brother, against Clytemnestra their mother, and Aegisthus, their stepfather, for their murder of Agamenon their father Sigmund Freud developed the female aspect of the sexual development theory-describing the psychodynamics of sexual competition with mother for sexual possession of father as the feminine Oedipus
complex, yet it was his collaborator Carl Jung who coined the term Electra complex in 1913”.

Eugene O’Neill’s stature as a dramatist was summed up by Times in its laudatory obituary this: “Before O’Neill, the United States had theatre: after O’Neill it had drama”.

Mourning Becomes Electra is a trilogy designed on Oresteia showing the destruction of characters. This play refers to ‘Fate’ and ‘Greek’ Mythology. The play shows the psychological conflicts of the modern man. The Trilogy includes Home Coming, The Haunted and The Hunted. The play views Mannon family of New England. Ezra Mannon- the brigadier General and an ex- Judge, has gone to participate in the civil war and the mother- Christine and the daughter-Lavinia awaits the return of Ezra Mannon. Ezra is to return as the war ended on surrender of Lee’s forces.

Captain Brant, a man from the Navy is courting Lavinia. Lavinia learnt from a hired man who has been there for sixty year that Brant is the son of Lavinias’s Grand uncle who had seduced the Canadian maid servant. Brant’s father was expelled from the Mannon household by Lavinia’s Grandfather. Lavinia has visited New York where her mother is supposed to go on the pretext of her father illness but she has been meeting Adam Brant. Lavinia informed her brother Orin about her mother. Orin was in love with Hezel, Peter’s sister. Peter loved Lavinia.

Adam Brant’s mother has been ill-treated and he would like to be avenged on the Mannon family. But he has fallen in love with Christine who hated her husband. Ezra Mannon is sick and in place of medicine Christine poisons him. Brant sent this poison to her. Ezra dies. The differences between mother and daughter increases. Lavinia was very dear to her father. Brant was very close to his mother. The first part ends here. Now, we shall go through the second part of the trilogy.

The Haunted is the second part of the Trilogy. In this part Orin returns from war. He got injury in head. Christine was successful in getting favour of her son. Lavinia gives minute details regarding Christine in the room where her father’s dead body has been lying. Lavinia and Orin follow Christine to the ship in which she has gone to warn Brant against Orin. Orin shots Brant. The next day Christine commits suicide. Lavinia gives the impression that he mother has father’s death. In first part ‘The Homecoming’ Ezra Mannon is killed and in the second one Brant and Christine died. Now let’s see what happens in the third part.

In ‘The Hunted, Orin and Lavinia are back after visiting China and various other islands of the south East Lavinia has grown more beautiful like her mother and her brother has incestuous love for her. Lavinia wanted Orin to marry Hazal who was Peter’s sister but her wise could not be fulfilled. She herself wanted to marry Peter but this wise of hers remained unfulfilled. Orin shoots himself. Lavinina loved peter very much but breaks with him. She decides to share the fate of other Mannons and she orders the curtains on
the window to be drawn to exclude the sunlight. She decides to remain in her house till her death.

O'Neill was not satisfied with the realistic details of his first draft of the play. He was eager to introduction psychological fate and symbolism. For this he brought the sea as a symbols and mask. The playwright has presented the sea as a symbol of escape and the house has become on image of tomb or love and hate. O'Neil has referred to the sea-symbol.

"Develop south sea Island motive-its appeal for them all-release, place, security, beauty, freedom of conscience, sinlessness etc. longing for the primitive and mother symbols yearning for pre-natal non-competitive freedom for fear makes this Island theme recurrent motive" Orin and Lavinia after the death of their mother escaped to sea to come in contact with the sea and the island the image of mother to get peace.

O'Neill does not follow Greek plot blindly. He makes changes according to the need of American stage. In Greek play brother had no incestual love for the sister. O'Neill adheres Greek plot, he widens the perspective by introducing the incest motive between Orin and Lavinia. There was not such motive behind the relation of Orestes and Electra. According to stark young-

"The story itself follows the Greeks up to the middle of third division of the play and there the insect motive, the death of Orin and transfersences of the whole situation and dramatic conclusion from Aeschylys, Sophocles and Euripides. Adam Brant’s relation to the family adds to the role of the lover the motif of a blood relationship. The old hired man, the confident, parallels of some extent a Greek device, familiar to us in countless plays. The town’s people and workmen are a kind of chorus. Many of the shadings and themes are from the older plays. The division of the play into three parts is, of course, like the Triology of the Greek dramatists. On the other hand, the dividing line is much less distinct in Mourning Becomes Electra. The final curtain of the first part, for, it is true, on Mannon’s death as in Aeschylys it does on Agumemnon, out there is not the same effect of totality because of the stress put on Lavinia. In Agmemnon, Electra even does not appear. In this way we find similarities and dissimilarities with the Greek theme”.

The servant’s role, the play’s division in three sections, the role of charous resemble the Greek Triology psychological condition of the tragedy. The house of Mannon was sepulchre. She said-

"Each time I come back after being away, it appears more like a mask on puritan Gray ugliness. We can see the ugliness of Puritanism in old Abe, and later on in Ezra Mannon and Abe Mannon resembled in the way they exhibited David, his brother because he fell in love with Marle Brantome, a maid-servant. No supernatural power is found in the play. The force of denial and destruction dominated the characters.
The determinism of the play attracted the modern audience. The conflict of the play lies in love and lust. Ezra Mannon was the image of pride and egotism. There was no difference between love and lust for him. The Mannon believed that one is born to die. Whereas Marie and Christine had instinctive love for life. Orin and Lavinia inherited Mannons. Brant’s mother died. Christine did suicides. Christine had physical charms. She had rich copper hair and beautiful eyes. Lavinia inherited her attractiveness from her mother. She was her copy in figure and charms.

Lavinia becomes the embodiment of Christine and her brother embodies her father. Lavinia did not accept her brother’s incestuous love. Orin kills himself Lavinia remains alive in the Mannon family. Orin could not bear his sister’s hatred that’s why he shoot himself. Lavinia remains alone to suffer Mannon’s doom. Lavinia shoots at the portraits of her ancestors with the supremacy of the Motherhood in her. Her Puritanism was was defeated but she walks stiiffy.

We find neurotic pride present somewhere in Shakespearean and Greek plays. Heroes and heroines of O'Neill's plays are quite different. Doris Falk writes-

“He must make a choice between alternate images of the self in order to discover the real self which he often fails to do. Certainly he performs acts-if nothing else, he antagonizes other characters who are engaged in their own search for self and it is of this conflict with other is only a byproduct of the protagonist’s conflict with himself”

Robert Frost Whitman, slights the incestuous motives and O'Neill’s debt to Freud in the play-

“This essentially incestuous relationship which control much of the action of the play, may send the unwary reader to his Freud, but it will be a fruitless trip. It is true that O'Neill hoped-to get modern psychological approximation of Greek sense of fate”.

The mask-like face staged, was new technique. This device was criticized. This play is a great work in its delineation of the ‘psychological fate through the paralleling of the plot with the Greek tragedy. This play has many characteristics including tragic intensity, expressionism, experimentation, depth etc. It has psychological significance. The playwright has given us an opportunity to peep into the characters inner conflict. The play also satisfies some of the codes of tragedy laid by Aristotle. It’s interesting that the length of the play doesn't deviate our attention.

**Themes of Mourning Becomes Electra**

The Inner Conflict

In Mourning Becomes Electra, O'Neill leaves for a while the war between God and science and returns to the more limited conflict within the ‘suffering’ individual. But the conflict and the suffering are traceable more specifically than ever to the fixations upon
father and mother, to the tension between puritanism and freedom, pride and love, death and life. As before, in most of the plays since Desire Under the Elms all other masks and values stem from the power of the father-and-mother-images, the Oedipus and Electra complexes.

In his detailed “Working Notes and Extracts, froth a Fragmentary Work Diary”, O’Neill outlines his purpose and method in Mourning Becomes Electra, emphasizing repeatedly his equation of the complexes with destiny. They are “a modern tragic interpretation of classic fate without benefit of Gods—for it (the play), must before everything remain (a) modern psychological play—fate springing out of the family.”

Working out of the Family Fate

As with the original Atreidae, the family fate of the New England Mannons is ancestral, not limited to one generation. It has been set in motion before the opening of the play by Abe Mannon, father of Ezra (Agamemnon) and grandfather of Lavinia and Orin (Electra and Orestes). Abe’s younger brother, David, had been involved in a liaison with a French-Canadian governess, Marie Brantome, resulting in her pregnancy. David married her, but Abe (in Lavinia’s words) put them both out of the house and then afterwards tore it down and built this one because he wouldn’t live where his brother had disgraced the family. The child of David and Marie is Adam Brant, the Aegisthus of the play, who returns to avenge his parent’s death in poverty and misery after their exile.

Pride as a Source of Death

The house of Mannon, therefore, was built upon outranged pride and puritanism, leading inevitably to death for the Mannon line. For them pride is the source of death, and love is the source of life. Existence for the Mannons is life-in-death from which love, represented by Marie Brantome, has been shut out. In their longing to escape the ugly reality of their actual lives the Mannons yearn for release in love untainted by pride and sin, and in death itself.

Christine’s acceptance of sexuality, has been embittered by Ezra’s Puritanism—distorted into a possessive passion; but to her husband, lover, and children, she still represents release and spinelessness. Even to Lavinia, who hates her because she “stole all love from me when I was born”, Christine is still the longed-for mother, as well as the image of herself, Lavinia, as giver and lover.

Shift of Emphasis

Since O’Neill has shifted the emphasis of the trilogy from Orestes to Electra, the changes which take place in the character of Lavinia provide a new dimension to the theme of the play. Caught like Nina Leeds in the father-complex, she struggles at once to realize and to escape from a self-image which is only a reflection of her soldier father. Her physical appearance tells the story: tail like her mother, her body is thin, flat-breasted and
angular, and its unattractiveness is accentuated by her plain black dress. Her movements are stiff and she carries herself with a wooden, square-shouldered, military bearing. She has a flat dry voice and a habit of snapping out her words like an officer giving orders. But in spite of these dissimilarities one is immediately struck by her facial resemblance to her mother. This facial resemblance, the mask of the mother in Lavinia, will have its moment of fulfilment, but only briefly, until God the Father’s lightning strikes again.

Pride, Puritanism and Vindictive Justice

The father, Ezra, embodies the characteristics of the family which constitute their fate—pride, puritanism, and a strong sense of vindictive justice. Because of his ingrown egotism and his guilty attitude towards sex, Ezra does not, at the beginning of the play, know how to love. Desire for his wife takes the form of brutal and clumsy lust. Not until he has known the comradeship of other men on the battlefield and has seen death, does he become aware of the significance of love and life; “Death made me think of life. Before that life had only made me think of death……That’s always been the Mannons’ way of thinking. They went to the white meeting-house on Sabbaths and meditated on death. Life was a dying. Being born was starting to die Death was being born.” Ironically, his ability to love and his insight into life come to Ezra only when he returns home to Christine’s hatred and his own death.

Suicidal Frustrations

Christine has fallen in love with Adam Brant, the son of Marie Brantome. When Ezra is in the throes of a heart attack, Christine deliberately withholds his medicine. To the outside world, Ezra appears to have died from natural causes; Lavinia however, discovers her mother’s guilt. She plans her vengeance—driven, not only by the Mannon sense of justice and her love for her father, but by her frustrated love for Adam and hatred and jealousy of her mother. Since Christine has ‘stolen’ the love of both men from Lavinia, the fitting relation for Lavinia is not to take her mother’s life, but to take from her the love which is her life. At Lavinia’s instigation, Orin murders Adam Brant. Christine takes her own life, and after Christine’s suicide the spirit of vindictiveness and death in the Mannons seems to be temporarily satisfied, and Lavinia can come to life. She takes on all the attributes of her mother; “She seems a mature woman, sure of her feminine attractiveness. Her brown-gold hair is arranged as her mother’s had been ... The movements of her body now have the feminine grace her mother had possessed.” Now, at perhaps her guiltiest, she has lost her, sense of sin and death. Her father’s ghost in Lavinia has now been placated; like him, she could find life only after experience of death.

Chained to Mannons

And as Lavinia assumes the characteristics of the mother, Orin takes on those of his father. He even wears a beard and walks like a “tin soldier“. Together they take a trip to
the East, stopping at the South Sea Islands. Orin watches Lavinia’s new sexuality with puritanical disapproval and jealousy. He feels that he and Lavinia have actually become their father and mother; “Can’t you see I’m now in Father’s place and you’re mother?...I’m the Mannon you’re chained to!”

Symbolic Incest Pattern

To complete the symbolic incest pattern representing the lonely Mannons’ introversion and their narcissistic inability to love any but another Mannon, Orin falls in love with his sister. The same duality of love and loathing for oneself and its reflection in another which has always dominated Mannon relationships now governs this one. Orin hates Lavinia as much as he desires her; she has become to him what the Furies were to Orestes, a constant reminder of guilt, driving him towards madness. He wants to become her, lover in order to force her to share his guilt. “How else can I be sure you won’t leave me? You would never dare to leave me—then! You would feel as guilty then as I do......” Lavinia, both fascinated and repelled, shouts her hatred at him: “I hate you you’re too vile to live! You’d kill yourself if you weren’t such a coward.”

Crumbling of the Illusion

With these words Lavinia has committed her last murder. When Orin shoots himself Lavinia’s, last illusion of her own innocence begins to crumble. The puritan conscience (or superego or father-god), from which she has found release in identification with the mother, now reasserts itself. She shouts defiance at the portraits of her ancestors, “I’m Mother’s daughter—not one of you......!” but even as she does so, the Mannon pride claims its own. The feminine Lavinia now “squares her shoulders, with a return—of the abrupt military movement copied from her father which she had of old—as if by the very act of disowning the Mannons she had returned to the fold—and marches stiffly from the room.”

Last Effort to Reach For Life

Lavinia takes one more desperate effort to reach from behind her mask of death toward life. She begs her childhood sweetheart, the innocent, untempted, and unsuspicuous Peter, to marry her. Even as she pleads with him, however, she knows that the dead have not forgotten, and, will not rest until justice has been performed. She must pay. for their lives with her own, not in the easy expiation of actual death—that would be the release for which,’ she has always longed—but in a return to the living death which is the Mannon fate, and which, as always, is to be accomplished by Mannon pride. She tells Peter goodbye, as Seth, the gardener, sings the refrain of his “Shenandoah”.

The Trap of Self Claims Its Prey

When Lavinia “pivots sharply on her heel and marches woodenly into the house, closing the door behind her”, the tension between love and pride, life and death, is dissolved;
only, pride and death remain. Violated order has been restored the trap of self has finally and with finality claimed its inevitable prey.

**Mourning Becomes Electra as psychological play**

A play primarily concerned with the emotional and mental lives of the characters rather than the external events of the plot. Character and characterization are of extreme importance in such works. In a psychological drama the stress is laid on the motives which impel to perform an action rather than the moral consequences. This kind of drama rests on the discoveries made by Freud and his successors in the field of psychology.

Freud and his followers described human relations in terms of sexual connotation which laid the bases of critical approaches which try to interpret literature with respects emotional and mental bent of characters. They also give the concepts of Oedipus and Electra complex. Moreover, they said that repressed sexual desires mould the whole character of human beings.

Their work gave a new understanding of human actions and deeds. From their work came the concept of psychological realism. Modern writers never neglect psychological realism. With help of psychological realism humanism took a great leap further. Before Freud and his doctrines, human beings were considered either virtuous or vile. Hence virtuous were adored and loved, while were hated and loathed. But psychological realism showed that human beings are neither virtuous nor vile. Rather they pushed into their role by a number of circumstances. These circumstances can have their roots in social, biological, religious and many other sources.

If we apply the above mentioned remarks on the play Mourning Becomes Electra by Eugene, we find that the play abides by the remarks mentioned above. Mourning Becomes Electra is about an aristocratic family. This family is ruined and finally wiped out because of some flaws in the members of the family. Ezra Mannon fails to love his wife Christine because she is below in status. Christine falls in love with an other man, Adam Brant. When she is discovered by her daughter, Lavinia, she kills her husband by poisoning him.

It not difficult to interpret why Christine falls in love with Adam Brant and why she finally kills her husband or the behavior of any other character in the play. Ezra loved Christine before their marriage because of her physical beauty and charm. But as soon as they are married and Christine comes without any dowry, his love ceases. And when Christine watches this change in the behavior of her husband, she is emotionally cut off with her husband. She finds solace in her children, especially in her son Orin, but when Orin is taken away from her she becomes very desperate. Her position in Mannon House was that of an extra man. Conversation between the servants in Act one of the play is an ample proof of her status in her home. Again behavior of her daughter shows the magnitude of torture she was undergoing on basis in the Mannon House. A person facing
this kind of circumstances becomes surely desperately. Though we cannot approve her action, we can understand them and it is this understanding that we feel sympathy for Christine in spite of the fact that she commits an unforgivable sin by murdering her husband.

Now her murder of her husband was the vilest thing ever expected from any woman but had she any other option? Perhaps no. She could not have secured divorce from Ezra as Lavinia tells her bluntly and if she had run with Brant, her life could have become very miserable because Ezra was an influential person. And even if Ezra had not got Brant blacklisted, she could not have gone on living with Brant without marriage because Brant would have got tired of her finally and she had the example of Marrie Brantome. Her only chance was if Ezra had died some way. Then she could have married Adam and she could have got her share out of Ezra's property to live comfortably with Brant. She was hoping that war would that but her hope did not come true and she had to do it herself.

Similarly we can understand the actions of all other characters because the playwright has laid their minds and souls bare before us by their psychological portrayal. Lavinia’s love for her father and Christine’s love for Orin can be explained in psychological terms. Here the writer used to hint at what Freud and his successors termed as Oedipus and Electra complex.

On the surface the play seems to be a revenge story and the playwright seems to hint at that revenge is a self-destructive passion. In other words revenge destroys both parties involved. And this is what actually happens in the play. Adam Brant uses Christine to revenge sufferings of his mother and Orin kills Adam Brant to revenge the murder of his father. But the story does not end here. It has other dimensions and avenues. At the end of the story, we can safely say that a family with upbringing like Mannons was sure to suffer because pride and hypocrisy had gone deep in their bones. Abe’s pride and hypocrisy showed the seeds of their destruction when he disowned his brother who fell in love with a maid. However his action can be interpreted in psychological terms. He was forced to that decision because of fear of society and religion. Eugene shows us how these forces make a human being what he becomes.

In conclusion we can say that Mourning Becomes Electra is a psychological play because in this play the playwright shows how the past experiences of people influences their life. All the characters have been drawn with great psychological insight. That is why we fell sympathy fall the characters. Although all of them perform vile deeds, we feel that we will not do justice if we say any of them vile because they are forced into those actions because of circumstances in which they are placed. Anyhow whatever they do and however they behave is convincing and based on realism. It does not that everyone will do what they did or behave the way they behaved. It only means that human beings are capable of behaving the way they behave if they find themselves in the kind of circumstances in which they playwright has placed the characters of Mourning Becomes Electra.
Symbolism in Mourning Becomes Electra

Edwin Engel, in his brilliant analysis of the play, pointed to the dominant symbols and philosophy of Mourning Becomes Electra:

Symbolism is the practice of representing objects or ideas by symbols or of giving things a symbolic character and meaning. For example scales symbolize justice; a dove stands for peace; a lion stands for strength and bravery. In all literary works, symbolism uses a concrete image to express an emotion or abstract idea. A symbol shows more than what is actually seen. Symbolism as a literary movement started in France in the nineteenth century.

O'Neill's use of symbolism is highly artistic. His use of symbolism is, artistically intended to extend the scope and meaning of the play. In "Mourning Becomes Electra", O'Neill uses Freudian psychological symbols.

He has used in his play a number of symbols - the mother image, the Blessed Isles (Desert Island), the Mannon portraits, etc. The very house of the Mannons stands as a symbol of hatred and callousness (cruelty, coldness). As Edwin Engel says, In Electra the Mother is a primordial (ancient) image, an archetypal (classic, conventional) experience shared by all the Mannons. Thus, Lavinia is identified with her mother, Christine, and both are the image of Marie Brantome.' Adam Brant falls in love with Christine because he associates her with his mother Marie. To him Lavinia looks like her mother. Only his mother (Marie Brantome) had hair like hers. O'Neill uses the Mother-image in details in the case of Orin. His love for his mother has sexual overtones (hint). He is his mother's cry-baby. He used to wait as a child to get an extra goodnight kiss from his mother. When he comes back from the war he finds his mother beautiful, she is his 'only girl'. And Christine replies, 'You're a big man now, aren't you?' Lavinia and Orin are drawn to the parent who belongs to the opposite sex. With Orin, his mother means everything that is sweet, pure, lovely and comforting and peaceful.

He feels his mother around him in the Blessed Islands; the breaking of the waves was her voice. The sky had the colour of her eyes;" the whole island was Christine. So the mother symbol means much more than mother - peace, security, love, freedom from fear. After the suicide of Christine, Lavinia occupies the mother image for Orin and he loves her with all the guilt in him, the guilt they shared. Orin's subconscious motive, in taking Lavinia is to possess his mother completely and Lavinia would be able to share the burden of his guilt.

The Blessed Isles are a symbol of joy, purity and innocence of Orin, 'Lavinia and Christine and Adam. O'Neill is voicing (expressing) a yearning in the heart of the puritan man for an ideal paradise full of beauty and sinlessness. The islands are a place of beauty for Adam; a refuge and paradise for Orin and a lode (level) star for Christine and Lavinia. Thus the Blessed Islands have been invested with psychological dimensions of peace and new trouble-free life. The islands are thus an image of fresh new life. The
islands motif (image) runs through the whole play tantalizing (tempting) and attracting Orin, Lavinia and Christine to a life of peace and nature and unalloyed happiness - their dream of an earthly paradise. As Lavinia says, 'I love those islands. They finished setting me free. There was something there, mysterious and beautiful - a good spirit - of love - coming out of the land and sea. It made me forget death. The islands stand for freedom from all puritan tabs (, bounds, check) freedom from pain and misery. O'Neill shows an average American's yearning to escape and return to paradise. But it remains a paradise lost a vision unachieved for grief is the lot of the Mannons and mourning becomes Electra.

The song of Shenandoah serves the purpose of a choral song. In the first part - Home Coining - Seth sings that melancholy song which has the brooding (gloomy, threatening) rhythm, of the sea. The song foreshadows (predict) unattainability and frustration for the characters. The song is there again after Christine's suicide; 'Oh, Shenandoah. I can't get near you,' casting a veil of finality (conclusiveness, determination) and mystery on Christine's death.

The symbol of the Mannon House shows us much more than a large house. It is a house built in hatred (of Marie Brantome's marriage with David). It is a house of death and the dead Mannons' portraits always intervene in the path of happiness of their younger generation. It is a house, haunted by ghosts and sin and evil.

The use of symbolism adds a poetic quality to O'Neill's prose and universalizes the theme. It adds a new, dimension of emotion and depth of meaning to the dark events of the play. Thus as Travis Bogard puts it,

"Mourning Becomes Electra, perhaps O'Neill's most secular (worldly) play is also his least symbolic work to date. Such symbols as exist in the play, the house, for example, or the portraits, or the flowers, are all related to the human-beings at the central focus. Now, none of the conflict between character and symbol that beset (plagued, under pressure) many of the minor works and such major plays as Strange Interlude enters to plague this study of crime and retribution (revenge). There are no ambiguities; nothing is vague or suggested. The characters are drawn precisely, their story fully told, and they move toward a comprehensible (clear, understandable) and convincing destiny."

**Destructive Power of The Romantic Ideal in Mourning Becomes Electra**

O'Neill’s Anti Romanticism

S. K. Winter says; "Critical thought in the modern world has. been a relentless-enemy of the romantic’ ideal, and no. modern writer has attacked it more consistently or more bitterly than Eugene O'Neill.” The exaggerated romanticism which enveloped the American theatre nurtured the mind of O'Neill’s youth and provoked the rebellion of his
maturity. Against that tradition his plays are a direct challenge. He hates the false dreams and false ideals and false endings that have dominated the American stage and are still the, inspiration of the movies.

Romantic Ideals as Disease

To O’Neill these ideals are not harmless entertainment, but a virulent disease that has eaten into the core of life, rotting and destroying the only hope for salvation that is possible for man. O’Neill believes that man’s hope lies in his being willing to face life as it is, accepting its limitations and, on the foundations of these very shortcomings, erecting a new world free from the tyranny of romantic dogmatism.

Criticism versus Seduction

The creative imagination will not always obey the logic of cold reason, and nothing is more characteristic of O’Neill than the conflict between his criticism of the romantic ideal and the manner in which he succumbs, at times to its seductive appeal. I doubt if there is a character in the whole range of his work who could be described as truly realistic in the sense that Bazarov, Pelle, or Sister Car might be called realists. Perhaps the greatness of O’Neill’s characters lies in this very fact: that they are too complex, too involved with the cross current of life to be purely one thing or the other. Their conflicts give them a quality “which” inspires confidence in their humanity and enlists the, reader’s sympathy and understanding in a’ way that more consistent and unified personalities never could.

The Dreamy Eyes

A study of the men and women that move through the world of O’Neill’s dramas reveals some noteworthy characteristics that many of them have in common. One is impressed by the courage and fortitude with which they face the unfavourable circumstances of the world in which they live. They are determined to give life meaning and, value in defiance of a world that is impersonal and unconcerned about the ambitions of, human beings. It is not this characteristic that I wish to emphasize at this point but something that is purely physical and, at the same time, suggests a hidden romantic passion in the nature of O’Neill. Buried deep in his inner being is a love for some quality that the materialistic interpretation of life does not seem to bring out in its proper perspective. In order to discover just what this is, it will be necessary too note, in some detail, his descriptions of the Reading characters in many different plays to observe what physical characteristics they have in common. In the pursuit of this study a curious fact comes to light. No matter who the character may be or what his occupation or position in the social order is the favourite character of an O’Neill play has dreamy eyes. His characters live in two worlds: one the outward world of physical reality, the, other, a world of unfulfilled and passionate desire. This latter world is one which the dreamer wishes for with all the pent-up powers of his being. To this world he will sacrifice all that life has given him, for there is nothing in life that for a moment is comparable to the genuine reality of his
dream. Captain Bartlett commits murder because his longed for dream of pirate treasure seems to, have come true, and in another play, another sea captain sacrifices the sanity of his wife in order that his desire for a full load of whale oil may become a reality.

Tragedy of Romantic ideal

The incest theme began in Dynamo, and in a sense wrecked the play, only to find its proper expression in the story of General Mannon’s family. The tragedy that ends with Lavinia’s resolve to “Live alone with the dead, and keep their secrets” began in the home of her grandfather long before she was born. Ezra Mannon as a child had been in love with Marie Brantome, but it was his uncle, David, who was the successful lover. So deep was Abe, Mannon’s against his brother who had stolen the affection of the Young woman that he himself had loved——loved in the thwarted Mannon sense of love, which dares not face the truth——that he drove him and his sweetheart from his home, and eventually destroyed the house in order that all members of the cursed experience might be obliterated forever from his life.

False Romantic Ideal

In that episode begins the false romantic ideal which finds its, culmination years later in the grandson as accomplice in the murder of his uncle and the long series of crimes that follow. From the beginning the misfortunes of the Mannons grow out of an inability to face, the reality of life. They live by false Puritan standards of behaviour. They did not know and could not learn that man as a psychological phenomenon is doomed to disaster if compelled to live within the confines of a limited creed. One by one “Death” came tacitly and took them from the sunlight of a world they had never seen except through the coloured glass of the “Meeting House” windows. They didn’t know what it was all about until too late to learn a new way of life.

Romantic Ambiguity of the Islands

The world tour of Orin and Lavinia is one of the great tragic conceptions of O’Neill, for these two children are doubly doomed because they do not know that their tragedy Ties within, and that were they able to flee from the plane itself they would still bear it with them. As they travel they make one faint gesture in the direction of freedom, but the scars on the past had left a tissue which inhibited forever a turn into a new world. I refer to the Islands of the South Seas that had been so dear to the memory of Captain Brant, and dear also to the imagination of O’Neill as they were to Melville, one of the very few authors that are mentioned by name in O’Neill plays. No single passage in the play touches the heart more than Orin’S sad speech in which he tells of these Islands with a bitterness born of his disillusionment. For, as he says ‘‘They turned ,out to be Vinnie’s Islands, not mine. They only made me sick —and the naked women disgusted me. I’ guess I’m too much of a Mansion, after all, to turn into a pagan.’ To Lavinia they were real, they were an escape, so she thought, from all that had cursed her family for generations. They were to her all that her young lover had promised her, but she could
not accept that which she wanted. The cruel hand of tradition led her back to her doom, where she told Peter the story of the Islands in these words: "I loved those" Islands. They finished setting me free. There was something there mysterious and beautiful—-a goad spirit—-of love—-coming out of the land and sea. It made me forget death. There was no hereafter. There was only this world—the warm earth in the moonlight—the trade wind in the coco palms—the surf on the reef—the fires at night and the drum throbbing in my heart—the natives dancing naked and innocent—-without knowledge of sin.

Realization Comes Too Late

It is a characteristic of the Mannons that they knew or realized in a dim sort of way what was wrong with them, but always the realization came too late to set straight their crooked path of life. General Mannon discovered a new philosophy on the night that he was murdered, a discovery that, made twenty years earlier, would have saved him and his family. And what may he said of him in this respect may be said of many of O'Neill’s characters with reference to the romantic ideal. An uncritical analysis might lead a reader to believe that O'Neill had stacked the fates against them. The opposite is really true, for it is typical of the romantic dreamer that he does not, nor can he comprehend the falsity of his position until it is put to the crucial test, and then it is too late to turn back. It is O'Neill’s clear development of this point that gives tragic reality to his work, and it is the failure to grasp this truth which has led many people to condemn him. But he is too much of an artist not to realize truly a fact of life that is the very essence of his own nature. He is the romantic dreamer who knows the deadly power of the dream’s appeal. In his life, as in his work, he has striven against it, and out of the struggle he has created the higher tragic beauty of his art. He never forgets that life will exact a double, toll from those who believe that dreaming of what life ought to be will make it other than it is.

Theme of death in Mourning Becomes Electra

Imminence of Death

Beyond the stereotyped message that “adjustment is all”, and in ironic contrast to it, there is in Mourning Becomes Electra an overwhelming, unrelenting sense of the imminence of Death. The events of the plot—-murder, murder-suicide, immurement—-objectify this sense of death as does the sepulchral facade of the Mannon house. Death is the goal of O'Neill’s Puritan; he meditates on it, he walks in its shadow, he lives for it. Since this Puritanism does not include a theological dimension, Death is an end in itself, not a passage to another world.

Death as Epiphany

Thus Death is not merely a thematic image in the play or simply a way of dispatching the personae and cleaning up the stage. It is the Epiphany that concludes the action, the vision to which the plot progresses. If Greek tragedy included the death of the hero, it
also provided a means of encompassing the idea of death in a framework of death-and-rebirth. O'Neill’s modifications, however, result in a hopeless reiteration that death is final, absolutely conclusive, the end. In addition to the agony and the pathos, the conflict and the suffering, the Oresteia includes a “rebirth” or epiphany, in which the hero is purified by both society and the gods. In Mourning Becomes Electra however, the epiphany is a vision of Death, of existential nothingness, the individual confronted by the void. “Rebirth” and purgation become simple release from suffering through suicide or self-immurement.

The Ubiquity of Death

John Henry Raleigh says: "Underneath the play’s Freudianism; its analogizing to Greek myth; its recurrent incest motifs generation after; its contrast between the uninhibited sexuality of the South Seas and the rigid prudery of New England and the accompanying contrast between the freedom, rhythm, brightness, and beauty of life at sea and the restrictions, mechanizations, darkness, and dreariness of life on land; underneath all these devices and themes is the ubiquity of death.” Yes, it is true. It is not only a question of the two murders (those of Ezra Mannon and Adam Brant) and the two suicides (Christine Mannon and Orin Mannon), but of the very fabric of the thought of the play, wherein the characters are not only trapped by their own dead but are also continually, tortuously meditating upon death. No one ever reaches a conclusion; all they know, with any certainty, is that death is surely, inexorably devouring the Mannons, their power, and their way of life. In act third of Homecoming the newly returned Ezra Mannon, back home from the war, cannot stop talking about death, despite his wife’s plea that he cease: “That’s always been the Mannons’ way of thinking. They went to the white meeting-house on Sabbaths and meditated on death. Life was a dying. Being barn was starting to die. Death was being.” But the war, seeing too many white walls splattered with blood “that counted no more than dirty water”, made all this seem meaningless, “so much solemn fuss over death!” Real death has thought him the meaninglessness of imagined death, the Mannon obsession. But by dawn he will be death’s victim, murdered by his wife. Ironically, he had earlier observed to his wife: “All victory ends in the defeat of death.”

Death Symbols and Themes

Death symbols and themes are woven into the play in all kinds of ways. For example, the ancestral Mannons, whose portraits glare down from the walls of the house, were "witch-burners". Again, the black-white symbolism that is endemic in O’Neill’s plays, and in American literature generally, is pervasive in Mourning Becomes Electra: the white faces set off by black clothing; the white porticos of the house dimming into darkness; and so on. And as in Melville, white does not signify purity; rather it means the charnel house. The sound effects concur. The first song heard is “John Brown’s Body”. The theme song of the play, “Shenandoah”, is meant to signify the more sombre aspects of the sea (“a song that more than any other holds in it the brooding rhythm of the sea”). The drunken chantyman of the fourth act of The Hunted staggers off singing “Hanging
Johnny”. Even American history plays a role in generating this aura of the charnel house, for the seminal national events in the background of the play are the Civil War, the greatest carnage experienced on American soil, and the assassination of Lincoln, its greatest single political tragedy. Moreover, beautiful, rhythmic ways of life are dying too, with the clipper giving way to the steamer. As the chantymen drunkenly and lugubriously laments to Adam Brant, the owner of a beautiful clipper: “Aye, but it ain’t fur long, steam is comin’ in, the sea is full smoky tea-kettles, the old days is dyin’, and where’ll you an’ me be then? (Lugubriously drunken again) Everything is dyin’ ! Abe Lincoln is dead.”

**Attack on Puritanism in Mourning Becomes Electra**

**Suggestive Setting**

Mourning Becomes Electra is a psychological dramatization of the evils of puritanism. The puritan heritage of the personae in the play is established in a way by the setting. O'Neill situates the action in New England. The locale—in literary convention at least—is rugged, cold, sea-bound. The thin-soiled, rock-strewn countryside with small, barren mountain-ranges and rivers running down to the gray Atlantic creates an atmosphere of severity, inflexity, firmness. The people are like the landscape—tight, thrifty, joyless, merchant class puritans, descendants of Anglo-Saxon nonconformists. The Mannons live in this setting; their attitudes are defined by the locale.

**O'Neill's Version of Puritanism**

Within this general situation O'Neill specifies, his puritanism. It is not a careful historical approximation of New England attitudes vintage 1865; it is puritanism as O'Neill understood it through the eyes of his own generation. And, in the early twentieth century, among the avant-garde of the literary world, it was the sum total of everything that was wrong with American society. No matter what the private views of individuals, the official American posture was a hypocritical, righteously irreligious (or a-religious) puritanism.

**The Voice of Mencken**

The puritan background of Mourning Becomes Electra comprises, along with broader classical elements, that complex of attitudes described and decried by Mencken and his associates. O'Neill weaves these attitudes into the background of his action. As the locale calls puritanism to mind; O'Neill visualizes the tradition in his stage setting. The Mannon house characterizes the family. The facade of the mansion is fronted by a white Grecian temple portico with six tall columns and a gray stone wall behind. This portico is like an incongruous white mask fixed on the house to hide its sombre gray ugliness.
the audience fails to mark the significance of the setting, early in the first act it is called to their attention. In the words of Christine:

Every time I come back after being away it (the house) appears more like a sepulchre! The “whited” one of the Bible—-pagan temple front stuck like a mask on Puritan gray, ugliness! It was just like old Abe Mannon to build such a monstrosity—as a temple for his hatred.

It is highly unlikely that a New Englander of 1865 would see the family home in this light; the voice is the voice of Mencken. The action is played against this parisaical facade as the house of the Mannons visualizes for the audience the traditional attitudes of the “House of Mannon”.

Cultural Base of the Mannon Heritage

This interpretation of the puritan heritage rests on a broad cultural base; the Mannon background also includes those features characteristic of the nineteenth-century New Englander. Grandfather Abe, whose Biblical name has dynastic implications, established a shipping business that made the family fortune. (The name Mannon, with resonances of Agamemnon, also has an appropriate resemblance to “Mannon”.) As a result of their dedication to business, the Mannons are the most prosperous family in the community. After learning law, he became judge and mayor of the town. Devotion to business is part of the traditional Protestant mystique. Diligence and industry lead to financial success—and this success carries with it a debt to society.

The Mannons its “The Elect”

To all outward appearances, the Mannons are “the elect”. Their prominence in the community and the lavishness of the mansion testify to their probity, according to the orthodox standard. Christine, whose adulterous union would hardly be explicable in a rigid puritan, is set apart from the real Mannons; her ancestry is not New England or even Anglo-Saxon. She is “furring lookin’ and queer, French and Dutch descended.” Her family has not been financially successful—“She didn’t bring no money when Ezra married her.” “She ain’t the Mannon kind” sums up the xenophobic reaction of the townspeople. This background is contrasted with the family’s—-Anglo-Saxon stock, old settlers, successful merchants, in short, puritan “elect”.

No Relish of Salvation

Though the family has all the visible earmarks of the predestined, these are simply outward show. Like the mansion, their puritanism is full of dead men’s bones, and their theology has no relish of salvation in it. “The Mannon way” is a preoccupation with death, the cold remnant of Calvinistic dogma. For example, Ezra says, “Life ‘had only made me think of death...That’s always been the Mannon way of thinking. They went to the white meeting-house on Sabbaths and meditated on death. Life was a dying.
born was starting to die. Death was being born...That white meeting-house. It stuck in my mind--clean scrubbed and white--washed- a temple of death.” According to the cultural analyses of historians; like Weber, the virtues of the puritan--industry, thrift, social responsibility, regular habits, careful avoidance of sensuality, all stemmed from a search for certainty about election. Somewhat oversimplifying Calvin’s theology they depended on cautious organization and a clock-like regularity as protection against an irretrievable lapse—a fall whose implications extended out of time into the illud tempus of predestined election, that “moment” which melds the beginning with the end of time, the arche with the eschaton. No redemption is possible for the sinner within this system; once fallen, he is forever reprobate. The Mannon concern with death, however, does not relate it to grace, election and after-life. There is no theological foundation to the puritan code in Mourning Becomes Electra. Like the puritanism that Mencken describes, it is an appearance without substance, an ethic without a dogma. These attitudes provide a basis for the motivation of the personae, but, unlike the tribal code of the Oresteia, they do not include an Olympian dimension.

Sex and Puritanism

Another prominent feature of the Mannons’ puritanism is their attitude towards sex. For O’Neill’s generation, puritanism was associated, first and foremost, with a repressive attitude towards sexual impulses. This appetite posed the greatest problem for the Calvinist; it exercised the strongest pull and thus had to be most zealously guarded against. The “fall from grace” gradually assimilated sexual overtones; the fallen woman fell only in one direction.

Sex and the Family Curse

O’Neill’s characters are caught between this revulsion and fascination. The origin of the family curse is, in the first instance, Abe Mannon’s hatred towards his brother David because of David’s seduction of, and subsequent marriage to, Marie Brantome. He went so far as to destroy the house in which the seduction took place. This hatred has implicit approval in the puritan way—no association of the elect with the reprobate. By sustaining the orthodox position on sexual errance, Grandfather Mannon—who, it turns out, was in love with Marie himself—bequeathed his righteous hatred to the family. In the play this strain in the Mannon ethos finds full expression in the; reactions of Lavinia and Orin. In her first conversation with Captain Brant, Lavinia declares that she “hates love”, and equates it with “naked women and sin”. “Love” means the physical act of love; the Captain, like all men, dreams dirty dreams—of love. Christine, whose descent explains her liberal attitude—the French are traditionally a passionate people—derides her daughter for prudishness: “Puritan maidens should not peer too inquisitively into spring! Isn’t beauty an abomination and love a vile thing?” Love is sometimes vile also for Christine; her own marriage soon turned “romance into disgust”. She made her husband feel the burden of her distaste, and he expresses his reaction in good puritan style: ”What are bodies to me? ...Ashes to ashes, dirt to dirt! Is that your notion of love? Do you think I married a body?...You made me appear a lustful beast in my own
eyes—as you’ve done since our first marriage night.” For the Mannons, dirt and animality and abomination spell out the implications of sex.

The Fascination-Revulsion Syndrome

The obverse of the coin is depicted also; their revulsion is attended by a fascination. Though bodies are only bodies, when Ezra sets out to effect a reconciliation with his wife, he becomes passionate. Christine allays his suspicion about her affair with Brant by kissing him and allowing him to press her “fiercely in his arms”. Lavinia’s repugnance for mother’s sensuality is flavoured with jealousy, especially about her father’s affection. Of all the Mannons, Orin reveals this fascination-revulsion syndrome most. His passionate attachment to his mother, rife with sexual overtones, has kept him from marrying Hazel, but he is drawn by the girl’s purity, and he sees her passionless love for him as cleansing. On their return from the Islands, he finds Lavinia’s blossoming attractiveness repulsive—because he sees her now as desirable. The climax of the brother-sister relationship is Orin’s proposal that they have incestuous relations; this would both satisfy his desire and cement their mutual guilt. From the puritan point of view, the physical act of love between brother and sister is the fullest expression of their mutual damnation. The “curse” which began with David’s seduction of Marie Brantome spirals down to an incestuous proposal. No seventeenth-century divine would conceive in more suitable symbol for the ultimate reprobation of the Mannons; no libertarian would devise a clearer picture of the fascination-revulsion combination that Mencken and his school saw in puritanism.

Conventional Puritanism

The attitudes of the townspeople-chorus underscore the conventionality of the play’s puritanism. The middle-class conspiracy which aspires to Babylonian practices while proclaiming Christian values weds hypocrisy with a practical view of sex. The women gossip in orthodox fashion; coming away from Ezra’s wake, Mrs. Hills blurs out: “You remember, Everett, you’ve always said about the Mannons that pride goeth before a fall and that some-day God would humble them in their sinful pride.” This version embarrasses the company; afterward the mew draw aside for a less pious assessment. They make sniggering references to the General’s love-making as the probable cause of his angina. The lower classes are even blunter about their sexual preoccupation. Before the climax of the second play, the murder of Adam by Orin, the drunken sailor who serves as chorus complains about the “yaller-haired pig who put her arm around me so lovin’” and then cleaned his pockets. Similarly, in the knocking-on-the-gate episode which opens The Hunted, the crones who gather round the gardener allow that Christine was a “looker”. Owe offers to let her ghost sit on his lap if “ghosts look like the living”. The middle-class and the proletariat fill out the picture; they reflect Menckew’s contention that the puritan sexual code does not really present the aspirations of the society. And, while practice and appearances may differ among the classes, their attitudes with regards to sex have a common root; sex is animal, and degrading, not to be associated with “pure” love.
Limitations of Puritanism

O'Neill's understanding of puritanism provides conscious motivation for the personae. The Mannons think in puritan categories; they see their plight in these terms. But the playwright and the audience see their actions in a wider context that conflicts with but also in some sense explains, the puritan mentality. Puritanism does not clarify the darker matters that make the action, inevitable, that link crime to crime in necessary progress.

“Mourning Becomes Electra” : A Tragedy in Modern Sense

Eugene O'Neill is a one of great playwrights that America has ever produced. His plays reflect classical sense of tragedy coupled with modern psychology. His play “Mourning Becomes Electra” qualifies this statement on great extent. The classic and notorious problem about tragedy in modern appearance has been that the characters, not being over life-size but rather below it, excite pity without admiration and therefore without terror. Though O'Neill has talked of an “ennobling identification” with protagonists, he has only once tried to do anything about it: only in “Mourning Becomes Electra” are the characters over life-size. Unhappily this is no because of the size of their bones but, as it were, by inflation with gas, cultural and psychological.

One of the modern critics Schopenhauer declares that in “Mourning Becomes Electra” we find the true sense of tragedy that “it is not his own individual sins, i.e. the crime of existence itself”. So devoted was he to this conception, that he permitted it to inform the entire trilogy. The pessimism of the Greeks may have been equally black, their tragedies just as aware of the crime of existence, still “They would have despised”, as William James observed,

“A life set wholly in a minor key, and summoned it to keep within the proper bounds of lachrymosely”.

The unfulfilment, exhaustion, and apathy which are significant possessions of O'Neill's tragedy are effectively manipulated in the play. The Greeks were never as contemptuous of life as to seek consolation in death, nor as afraid of death as to calm did their fears by promising themselves, have the fulfilment after death of all that they vainly yearned for in life. O'Neill is not to be censured for the predicament, in which he found himself, or for the fashion in which he chose to extricate himself, but rather for misinterpreting his dream. For however ingeniously he substituted the premises of a rationalistic psychology, however adeptly he interpolated his allegory, however glibly he spoke of fate and destiny, crime and retribution, guilt and atonement, his dream in tragedy was not the Greek dream.

The appearance of “Mourning Becomes Electra” subsequent to Krutch’s estimate in 1929 of modern tragedy gave Crutch no cause to revise his assertion that the:
“Tragic solution of the problem of existence, the reconciliation to life by means of the tragic spirit is.... Only a fiction surviving in art”.

Indeed, O'Neill’s play bears out the statement by achieving precisely the opposite result: Electra offers a solution not to the problem of existence but to that of non-existence; it reconciles not to life, but to death. Nor did O'Neill invoke that Tragic Spirit which Krutch regarded as the product either of a “religious faith in the greatness of God” or of “faith in the greatness of man” although by 1932 it seemed to Krutch that he had satisfied this demand, that he had, in short, succeeded in investing man “once more with the dignity he has lost”. He insisted, begging the question,

“The greatness of the plays lies in the fact that they achieve a grandeur which their rational framework is impotent even to suggestion”.

In “Mourning Becomes Electra”, he convinces, that human beings are great and terrible creatures when they are in the grip of great passions, and that the spectacle of them is not only absorbing but also and at once horrible and cleansing. Here, it seems Krutch is entirely wrong. Not only has he missed the “meaning” of O'Neill’s trilogy, he has discerned in O'Neill’s characters qualities that are mostly non-existent. They are characters, moreover, whose passions are infantile rather than great, are spectacle that is horrible but scarcely cleansing. Catharsis is a condition, which O'Neill seldom achieved, preferring, as he did, narcosis or necrosis. That the deficiencies of “Mourning Becomes Electra”, when it is compared “with the very greatest works of dramatic literature” are limited only to its language is an opinion, which, if our judgments have been even moderately sound, has little to be said in its support. There is equally little to be said for Krutch’s contrast of Ibsen and O'Neill and, wherein he finds that O'Neill avoided the central fault of Ibsen’s tragedies, namely, that they are

“Too thoroughly pervaded by a sense of human littleness to be other than melancholy and dispiriting”.

Having defined “true tragedy ... as a dramatic work in which the outward failure of the principle personage is compensated for by the dignity and greatness of his character”, Krutch concludes that “O'Neill is almost alone among modern dramatic writers in possessing what appears to be an instinctive perception of what a modern tragedy would have to be”. Yet one has only to strip “Mourning Becomes Electra” of its spiritual malaise, its Freudian machinery, its self-conscious symbolism, its Gothic properties, its turgid style, to see how little better O'Neill has succeeded than Ibsen in satisfying Krutch’s definition of “true tragedy”. Ghosts, too, was a tragedy of family guilt in which the original scene is traced to the life-denying impulse. One side is happiness; on the other is “the source of the misery in the world”: law, order, and duty. Living in the house polluted by her husband’s profligacy, Mrs. Alving, the counterpart of Christine, revolts against the restrictive virtues which society has imposed upon her and which prevented Alving from finding “any outlet for the overmastering joy of life that was in him”. Oswald, haunted by his father’s sin, suffers not only physical consequences thereof, but repeats –
like Orin – the parents’ behaviour. Where Orin is afflicted with a stubborn case of Weltschmerz, and complications induced by a wound in the head – the dowry of the Mannons in general, Ezra is particular – Oswald suffers from congenital syphilis – the indirect of the Mannons way of life, but the direct consequence of his father’s dissolute actions. When, at the conclusion of the tragedy, Oswald locks himself and his mother inside their haunted house for paying out the family curse much as Lavinia is. Surely the madness of a paretic is not more melancholy and dispiriting than the masochism of a woman who denies herself the pleasure of dying.

More restrained than Krutch, George Jean Nathan never compared “Mourning Becomes Electra” “with the very greatest works of dramatic literature”, but he did declare it to be “indubitably one of the finest play that the American theatre has known”. Like Krutch, he mistook Weltschmerz for tragedy and ascribed purgative powers to hyper-emotionalism and to the manifestations of a neurotic sensibility. But Nathan came closer to the truth when he observed that O’Neill’s “passionate inspiration”, “the sweep and size of his emotional equipment and emotional dynamics” transcended the characters and the play. This is a euphemistic way of saying that “Mourning Becomes Electra” contains no adequate equivalent for the playwright’s excess of feeling. It is a fault that is present in most of O’Neill’s plays, and O’Neill himself was apparently aware of it when in “Mourning Becomes Electra” he consciously shunned “the many opportunities for effusions of personal writing about life and fate”. If the trilogy is less effusive than some of the preceding plays, its grandiosity is threefold greater than most. If it contains less “personal writing”, it is far from reticent concerning the author’s conception of life and fate, a conception which suggests that the glow felt by Nathan to be spreading over all “the glow that is O’Neill” is less “Luminous and radiant” than feverish.

**Mourning Becomes Electra follows the pattern of the Greek trilogy in the essentials.” Discuss.**

Suggestive Title

The title of the play itself suggests the relation of the play to the Greek drama. The story of the house of Atreus was set down by Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and diverse other Greek writers whose works are not extant. From this house shadowed by an ancient curse, Agamemnon, brother of Menelaus, goes forth to the war at Troy.

His wife, Clytemnestra, the sister of Helen, during her husband’s absence takes for her paramour Aegisthus and shares the government of Argos with him. In due time Agamemnon having at the God’s behest sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia and bringing with him Cassandra, Priam’s daughter, returns, and is murdered by Clytemnestra and her lover. Electra, his daughter, is shamed and degraded and prays for the return of her brother Orestes, long ago sent out of the country by her mother and now become a man. Orestes returns, kills Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. He is pursued by the Erinyes,
and only after wandering and agony and a vindication of himself before the tribunal of
Athena’s Areopagus is he cleansed of his sin.

Bare Outlines

Mourning Becomes Electra begins with the mother and daughter, Christine and Lavinia,
waiting there in the house of the Mannons, the return of Ezra Mannon from the war,
which with Lee’s surrender is about over. A thread of romance is introduced between
Lavinia and Peter, and between Lavinia’s brother, Orin, and Hazel, Peter’s sister.
Meanwhile, Captain Brant comes to call; he pays a certain court to Lavinia, and she,
acting on a cue from the hired man, who has been on the place sixty years, traps him
into admitting that he is the son of one of the Mannons who had seduced a Canadian
maidservant and been driven from home by his father, Lavinia’s grandfather. She has all
her data straight now. She has suspected her mother, followed her to New York, where
Christine has pretended to go because of her own father’s illness, but has in fact been
meeting Adam Brant. Lavinia has written to her father and brother, hinting at the town
gossip about her mother. We learn that Captain Brant had returned to avenge his
mother but instead had fallen passionately in love with Christine, who loves him as
passionately as she hates her husband. From this point the play moves on, with the
father’s hatred of the son, who returns it, the son’s adoration of his mother, the
daughter’s and the mother’s antagonism, the daughter’s and father’s devotion, to
Christine’s murder of her husband with the poison sent by Brant and substituted for the
medicine prescribed against his heart trouble. Orin returns, after an illness from a wound
in the head. Christine tries to protect herself in her son’s mind against the plots of
Lavinia. Lavinia, in the room where her father’s body lies, convinces him with the facts;
they trail Christine to Brant’s ship, where she has gone to warn him against Orin. Orin
shoots Brant. Christine next day kills herself. Brother and sister take a long voyage to
China, a stop at the southern isles, come home again. Substitutions have taken place,
Lavinia has grown like her mother, Orin more like his father. Meanwhile, his old affair
with Hazel, encouraged at last by Lavinia, who now wants to marry Peter, is cancelled;
he finds himself making an incestuous proposal to Lavinia and is repulsed by her. He
shoots himself. In the end Lavinia speaking words of love to Peter, finds Adam’s name
on her lips. She breaks with Peter, orders the blinds of her house nailed shut, and goes
into the house, to live there till her death. Justice has been done, the Mannon dead will
be there and she will be there.

The Essential Pattern

Thus it is clear that Mourning Becomes Electra follows the pattern of the Greek trilogy in
the essentials. The first play, entitled the Homecoming is closest to its original. It tells of
the return of General Ezra Mannon (Agamemnon) from the Civil War, and of his murder
by his wife, Christine (Clytemnestra), at the urging of her lover, Adam Brant (Aegisthus).
And it ends with the confrontation of the mother by her daughter, Lavinia Mannon
(Electra).
Difference Between the Two Plays

Physically, the chief difference of the modern play from its original is that Christine and her lover do not stab the husband in his bath; she administers poison to him instead of the medicine he expects. But, if this difference of action seems minor, it points to a major difference of character, neither Ezra nor Christine Mannon shares the heroic stature of the Greek Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Ezra seems less the conquering hero than the lonely old man, and his guilt is disproportionally small—it is not the cruelty and self-willed pride of the Greek; it is only a puritanical failure to satisfy his wife in their love-relationship. And Christine shares neither the passionate hatred of Clytemnestra for her husband; nor her passionate love for Aegisthus. Rather she seems a neurotic, vindictive woman whose nature is poisonous rather than heroic. Although the first play explains the actions of the classical Agamemnon in modern psychological terms, it substitutes neurotic hatred for the full-blooded passion and violence of the original.

The Essential Outlines

The second play of the trilogy, entitled The Hunted also follows, the essential outlines of its Greek original. It centres upon the character of Orestes—now Orin Mannon, who has just returned from the war as this play begins. Confronted with the proof of his mother's guilt, Orin hunts down her lover and shoots him. But he does not murder his mother, as in the original Greek. Instead he tells her of her lover's death and confronts her with her guilt and with his own confused hatred of it, so that she is driven to commit suicide. The substitution of this suicide for the murder of the Greek original again emphasizes the anti-heroic nature of the modern protagonist. Nevertheless, in the case of Orin (Orestes), “the Furies” which were externalized in the Greek myth, now have been realized more dramatically in the tortured conscience of the modern “hero” and in the psychological confusions of his mind. And these psychological Furies have been motivated more fully by the modern incident of Orin’s mad laughter and wounding in the war. Therefore Orin seems to be driven by the tortured conscience of all modern man, in their realization of the evil of world war.

Departures From the Greek Originals

The third play of the trilogy entitled The Haunted departs more radically and purposefully from the Greek originals. It centres upon the character of Electra rather than that of Orestes, and it ascribes to this new Electra the only heroism—and the only true tragedy—of the three plays. In the Greek, Electra had been married to a peasant farmer and had remained subordinate to her brother. But, in his earliest note for the future plays, O'Neill directed: "Give modern Electra "gure in play tragic ending worthy of character. In Greek story she peters out into undramatic married banality." And throughout the planning and writing the trilogy he consistently developed this new conception until “Electra” became the title figure.
The Change of Action

Moreover, in changing the character of Electra from the Greek original, O’Neill also changed the action and the dramatic conception of the final play. Now, Orestes can no longer find absolution from the Furies which drive him (as he does in the Greek); he accepts damnation for the evil of his nature, and commits suicide, concluding: “The damned don’t cry!” But Electra triumphs over the evil of her heritage by recognizing it clearly, and by determining to live with it to the end: “I’m the last Mannon. I’ve got to punish myself.” And she begins her penance by telling Hannah “to throw out all the flowers”. She locks herself in with her memories: she will escape damnation by learning fully to understand her own past and how to “cry” or “mourn” for it. At the end the modern heroine regains her humanity by undertaking a tragedy greater than that of her ancestors. She, like her creator, begins her "long day’s journey into night".

**Mourning Becomes Electra is concerned with the fated family life of the Mannons. Discuss. (P.U 2004)**

R. D. Skinner rightly observes that “Mourning Becomes Electra is the drama of a soul at mortal grips with the love of self, the deadly poison of the spirit that denies all creation because it would be self-creative, self-sufficient, both creator and creature, man: coequal with God.”

The House of Mannon in this play is the summation of man in which the multitudinous characters that have gone before are only. pale, premonitory shadows of the realities at last revealed—the false prides, the timid abasements, the yearning for childlike peace, the struggles for freedom, exultant discoveries and crests of hope and the heartrending plunges into renewed darkness. Each of the male Mannon himself must die if the soul is to live, killed by, dying to his old self in the mystic formula of the poets and saints, if he is to be reborn to life and love. In this struggle to the death, it is only the spirit of the woman which lives on in solitary expiation, “until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let die.” Behind the closed doors of that house, the feminine soul, last to die to itself, must find the secret of purgation in silence and alone, beyond the gaze of men, in the sanctuary of the immortal inner will, where only the breath of God may touch its darkness.

Main Threads of Plot

In the first play entitled The Hunted General Ezra Mannon, one of a long line whose wealth and position have been gathered from the sea, returns from the war at a time when his partly foreign wife, Christine, has secretely been giving her love to a sea captain, Adam Brant. She knows him to be the son of another Mannon who “disgraced” his family by marrying a French-Canadian servant girl. Brant is genuinely in love with Christine, but in first seeking her out his sole purpose was revenge on the present head of the house of Mannon. Christine’s daughter Lavinia is devotee to her father with an
almost fanatical attachment, and doubly resents her mother’s infidelity, partly because she herself is attracted to Brant, who resembles her father, and partly because she has always instinctively taken her father’s part against her mother, whom she hates and of whom she is inwardly jealous.

Sinister Cloud of Love-of-Self

In the first play, Lavinia’s brother, Orin, is still away in camp, recovering from a serious head wound which has weakened his whole nervous system. But we learn that Orin is as much devoted to his mother, of whom he constantly dreams in his illness, as Lavinia is devoted to her father. Yet between brother and sister there is a similar bond of deep attachment—part of that sinister cloud of love-of-self, as reflected in one’s own family, which hovers over the ill-fated house. Lavinia lets her mother know that she has discovered her infidelity, but instead of threatening to tell her father, offers to keep silent if her mother will send Brant away forever. Christine is quick to strike at the truth of Lavinia’s action. “You wanted Adam Brant for yourself”, she says accusingly, “and now you know you can’t have him, you’re determined that at least you’ll take him from me! ...But if you told your father, I’d have to go away with Adam. He’d be mine still. You can’t bear that thought even at the price of my disgrace, can you?...I know you, Vinnie! I’ve watched you ever since you were little, trying to do exactly what you’re doing now! ‘You’ve tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin! You’ve always schemed to steal my place!’ Of course Lavinia denies and resents these charges bitterly, but persists in her determination until her mother, in desperation, promises to send Brant away.

A Strange Homecoming

The return of General Mannon is indeed a strange homecoming. In Lavinia alone he finds genuine pleasure and affection. But he has determined, during his long years of facing death, to rediscover the secret of life and to break down, if possible the barrier he has felt between himself and his wife, ever since the earliest days of their marriage. With great difficulty, he throws aside the reserve of years and tries to tell her of his loneliness and his love. But he faces only the mocking mask of a woman who has is already determined that the only way to free herself is to kill him. She has already arranged to have Brant send her some poisonous, tablets which she plans to give her husband instead of the medicine his doctor has prescribed for an increasing trouble of the heart. His heart disease will explain his death to world at large. She and Adam will be free.

In the intimacy of their first night together, when Ezra Mannon feels the false atmosphere of her pretended affection, she suddenly goads him with an open statement of her love for Brant, and tells him, moreover, Brant’s true identity as one of the “outlawed” Mannons. The emotional strain brings on as she has planned, a severe heart attack. She substitutes for his medicine the poison Brant has sent her. But in his death agony, Ezra Mannon calls out for Lavinia who reaches his room just in time to see him point an accusing finger at Christine and cry out “She’s guilty—-not medicine!” This
miscarriage of her plans is too much for Christine. She faints before she can conceal the package containing the poisonous tablets. Lavinia finds them, and at last, like the children of the House of Atreus, knows the full measure of her mother’s guilt. The play ends with Lavinia’s cry to the dead man, “Father! Don’t leave me alone! Come back to me! Tell me what to do!”

O’Neill’s Long Journey

In even the first part of this trilogy, one finds, of course, innumerable links to the struggle of the past which have beset O’Neill’s imagination. The strength of the Mannon family, for example, has’ come from the sea. But it is also the sea, in the person of Captain Brant, which helps to kill Ezra Mannon. Ezra, in his great loneliness of soul, is not unlike any number of the lonely souls, old and young, who wander through the stages of the O’Neill’s long journey, seeking but never finding understanding and completion.

Redemption From Self-Love

Christine herself is not of the Mannons. She is the unattainable “outsider” to those who love only themselves or the image of themselves. She can love Brant but only because, though, part Mannon, he is the son of another stock and, like herself, part outsider, “foreigner”. He is despised of the proud Mannons, because he comes of a servant stock, and the Mannons cannot serve others, being without humility. Outsiders are poisoned to the self-love of the Mannons. Yet Christine is the mother of the Mannon children, of those who are destined to expiate the primal sin of the house. That which kills is also fated to be that which will bring new life, because it comes from without the charmed and deadly circle of self-love. In this, the playwright touches instinctively upon that astounding paradox of mankind’s experience, that the redemption from man’s self-love can be found only through the death of man himself at the hands of what is itself evil—the outsider, the Caligula, the Pompeia, evil, in spite of itself, serving the ends of good.

Subtle and Terrific Struggle

The second part of the trilogy, The Hunted, comprises the revenge of Lavinia and Orin for their father’s murder. Orin returns from the hospital camp two days after the tragedy while the body of Ezra is still laid out in his study. There is a subtle and terrific struggle between Lavinia and Christine for the control of Orin’s weak will. Christine tries to mother him as of old, to play on his deep affection for her, and to warn him of the terrible charges he may hear from Lavinia. Christine tells him that Lavinia is really out of her mind. Intuitively, Orin feels a deep suspicion of his mother, but emotionally he cannot bear to think any evil of her. Deep in his heart, he is almost relieved at his father’s death, as he can now have his mother entirely to himself, and be as a child completely immersed in her love. During the long and murderous days of the war, he has often had the vision, as he killed men, that it was “like murdering the same man over and over” and as if “the man was myself!” Their faces, he says, “keep coming back
in dreams—and they change to father's face—or to mine." To be rid of his father, and also of the man in himself, so that he could return to childhood in his mother's arms had become his half conscious obsession. He wants to be alone with his mother in the enchanted Islands of his dreams, with the whole world apart from them. Christine encourages this mood in the hope that it will make Orin her champion against Lavinia.

Old Image of Death

But Lavinia, with something of the severity of her dead father, holds him grimly to a realization of the truth. She makes him, in spite of himself, acknowledge his mother's guilt, and then, finding that alone might not be enough to move him to vengeance, plays upon his instant jealousy of Brant. The thought of another man claiming his mother's love is too much for him. He and Lavinia secretly follow their mother to her rendezvous with Brant on his ship, in Boston harbour, and overhear her plans to escape. When Christine has left, Orin enters Brant's cabin and kills him. As he does so, the same old image of death comes before him. It is as if he had again killed his father!

Lavinia's Assumption of Her Mother's Role

Orin and Lavinia return to the ancient house of Mannon to tell Christine what they have done. Orin, immediately under her spell again, now that Brant is dead, begs for her forgiveness. But it is too late. Christine goes into the house and shoots herself. Orin remains to the last under the cloud of desire to have her protecting arms about him. And then the new and final theme appears—the assumption by Lavinia of her mother's role. She takes the bewildered Orin in her arms and whispers soothingly to him, "You have me, have'nt you? I love you. I'll help you to forget." Thus Christine's accusation is justified, that Lavinia wished to take her place.

The Ghosts of Parents

The third play, The Haunted, begins a year later, after Lavinia and Orin have completed a year's voyage to China and the Far East. In the far land of Kublai Kaan and the Princess Kukachin, a great change has taken place. Lavinia has lost the stern angularity of former days, in which she closely resembled her father, and has become strikingly like her mother. She even wears a dress of the same green colour her mother used to wear, instead of the black she once affected. Orin, on the other hand, who was formerly unable to hold the bearing of a soldier, now carries woodenly erect. "His movements and attitudes have the statue-like quality that was so marked in his father. He now wears a close-cropped beard in addition to his moustache, and this accentuates his resemblance to his father." The children are now living in the ghost of their parents.

Both Orin and Lavinia are aware of the change. In his moments of morbid bitterness, Orin even boasts of having become a Mannon and accuses Lavinia of having acquired a soul like his mother's "as if you were stealing her—as if her death had set you free—to become her!" But Lavinia, in spite of welcoming the change in herself, cries out "What
we need most is to get back to simple normal things and begin a new, life.” Lavinia tries sternly to make Orin face his hunting ghost, to acknowledge fully to himself his mother’s double guilt and her free choice of suicide. But the attempt is only partly successful.

Fresh Touch of Reality

A fresh touch of reality also comes into Lavinia’s life through her friendship for Peter Niles, whom she has known since childhood. The thought of him has been growing, in her mind during the long months of her voyage. The sea has had a cleansing effect upon her. “The ship and the sea---everything that was honest and clean” has reminded her of Peter. And another thought has come to her, too. “Remember I’m only Mannon”, she reminds Peter when they are at last together. The blood of the “outsider has been doing its work, to give her a new strength to face life. She now wants to marry Peter. But the spectre of Orin comes between them---Orin who is still sick with the old guilt of the Mannons, “possessed by the hate and death”. Orin discovers Lavinia kissing. Peter, and jealousy seizes him. The woman who has taken the place of his mother cannot be permitted to love another man!

A Living Tenor For Lavinia

Orin becomes a living terror for Lavinia. His increasing sense of guilt makes him want to confess everything. He has allowed himself to become engaged to Peter’s sister, Hazel Niles, but he is afraid to be alone with her and Lavinia is afraid to have them alone together. His guilty conscience might make him confess. He is secretly preparing a written confession of his crime---and this Lavinia suspects rather than knows. She at last forces an admission from him, and then brother and sister lacerate each other with accusation. It is again as if the ghosts of Christine and Ezra were walking in the house. And then a deeper terror than -the dread of Orin’s confessions intervenes. In his growing insanity and in his jealous determination to present Lavinia from marrying Peter, Orin sees Lavinia as neither mother nor sister but a woman, like the French---Canadian servant girl who was the mother of Brant. In an agony of revulsion and rage at _ this crowning revelation, Lavinia turns on Orin. “I wish you were dead !”, she cries, “you’re too vile to live ! You’d kill yourself if you. weren’t a coward !”

Orin’s Suicide and Lavinia’s Self-Punishment

Slowly the idea takes possession of Orin’s deranged mind. In death he can join his mother. He will be able to ask her forgiveness. He will find peace. He starts to rush from the room. Lavinia makes an attempt to stop him, but at that moment Peter- comes in and Orin escapes to his father’s study. Lavinia throws herself hysterically into Peter’s arms, murmuring “no one has the right to keep anyone from peace !” Peter, alarmed, starts to go after Orin, but Lavinia holds him tightly to her and talks against time. There is the sound of a shot. Orin has killed himself. Lavinia is the last of the Mannons. In the closing scene of the tragedy, after Orin’s funeral, Lavinia is again in black. The resemblance to her mother has disappeared. She is filling the house with flowers for
Peter, whom she feels she must marry. She must escape forever from the house of Mannon. But Hazel, to whom Orin has hinted just enough to make her feel the terror of the Mannon story, comes to accuse Lavinia of the guilt of Orin’s death and to plead with her to give up Peter. Lavinia is steadfast in her determination to marry him. But when he comes to her, she finds a growing suspicion and bitterness in his eyes. The dead are already standing between them. Almost in a frenzy, she asks him for his love, but even as she does so, the name of Adam, like the ghost of Adam Brant, escapes her lips. “I can’t marry you, Peter”, she cries in sudden defeat, “the dead are too strong!” And then, to drive him from her, she lies about herself. She takes a jealous word that Orin has dropped about a native in the far-off Islands they had visited and pretends the charge was true. As Peter loves her, horror-struck, she calls after him that it was a lie. But her cry is too feeble, too defeated. He does not hear. Lavinia is alone again with the Mannon dead.

Lavinia as Victim of Orin’s Self-Love

To Seth, the old gardener, Lavinia confides her last resolve. There is nothing left to do but return into the house. “Don’t go in then, Vinnie!” he exclaims in superstitious fright. But she is grimly determined now. “Don’t be afraid”, she says, “I’m not going the way Mother and Orin went. That’s escaping punishment. And there’s no one left to punish me. I’m the last Mannon. I’ve got to punish myself! Living alone here with the dead is a worst act of justice than death or prison! I’ll never go out or see anyone! I’ll have the shutters nailed closed so no sunlight can ever get in. I’ll live alone with the dead, and keep their secrets and let them hound me, until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let die.” As she enters the house, to remain there in lifelong expiation, her movements become the wooden, angular embodiment of the Mannons.

Lavinia’s Strange Cruel Smile

There is still pride left in the soul of Lavinia, and a “strange cruel smile of gloating over the years of self-torture” on her face as she begins her penance. But above and beyond the words of the playwright’s description, there is feeling of deepest introversion, of the turning back of the feminine soul into its innermost depths, as if to discover, in death to herself, the one last chance of a new life. Beneath the Mannon mask of utter love of self flows the blood of the “outsider”, that which brought death to all the males of the fated line, but may still find in the woman a chance for rebirth... “What we need most is to get back to simple normal things and begin a new life.” That was Lavinia’s cry after feeling the cleansing of the sea. One feels that in the deliberate, purposeful turning back into her past, Lavinia, the woman unlike the frightened childman who turned back to the maternal past, may discover the secret of living with fears until they are tamed, of opening her eyes to truth instead of mocking shadows, of finding tenderness in place of the sinister giants that seemed to block the agonizing path to maturity and peace.
In Mourning Becomes Electra past is synonymous with fate elaborate the statement. (P.U 2005)

The title of the play itself suggests the relation of the play to the Greek drama. The story of the house of Atreus was set down by Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and diverse other Greek writers whose works are not extant. From this house shadowed by an ancient curse, Agamemnon, brother of Menelaus, goes forth to the war at Troy. His wife, Clytemnestra, the sister of Helen, during her husband’s absence takes for her paramour Aegisthus and shares the government of Argos with him. In due time Agamemnon having at the God’s behest sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia and bringing with him Cassandra, Priam’s daughter, returns, and is murdered by Clytemnestra and her lover.

Electra, his daughter, is shamed and degraded and prays for the return of her brother Orestes, long ago sent out of the country by her mother and now become a man. Orestes returns, kills Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. He is pursued by the Erinyes, and only after wandering and agony and a vindication of himself before the tribunal of Athena’s Areopagus is he cleansed of his sin.

Bare Outlines

Mourning Becomes Electra begins with the mother and daughter, Christine and Lavinia, waiting there in the house of the Mannons, the return of Ezra Mannon from the war, which with Lee’s surrender is about over. A thread of romance is introduced between Lavinia and Peter, and between Lavinia’s brother, Orin, and Hazel, Peter’s sister. Meanwhile, Captain Brant comes to call; he pays a certain court to Lavinia, and she, acting on a cue from the hired man, who has been on the place sixty years, traps him into admitting that he is the son of one of the Mannons who had seduced a Canadian maidservant and been driven from home by his father, Lavinia’s grandfather. She has all her data straight now. She has suspected her mother, followed her to New York, where Christine has pretended to go because of her own father’s illness, but has in fact been meeting Adam Brant. Lavinia has written to her father and brother, hinting at the town gossip about her mother. We learn that Captain Brant had returned to avenge his mother but instead had fallen passionately in love with Christine, who loves him as passionately as she hates her husband. From this point the play moves on, with the father’s hatred of the son, who returns it, the son’s adoration of his mother, the daughter’s and the mother’s antagonism, the daughter’s and father’s devotion, to Christine’s murder of her husband with the poison sent by Brant and substituted for the medicine prescribed against his heart trouble. Orin returns, after an illness from a wound in the head.

Christine tries to protect herself in her son’s mind against the plots of Lavinia. Lavinia, in the room where her father’s body lies, convinces him with the facts; they trail Christine to Brant’s ship, where she has gone to warn him against Orin. Orin shoots Brant.
Christine next day kills herself. Brother and sister take a long voyage to China, a stop at the southern isles, come home again. Substitutions have taken place, Lavinia has grown like her mother, Orin more like his father. Meanwhile, his old affair with Hazel, encouraged at last by Lavinia, who now wants to marry Peter, is cancelled; he finds himself making an incestuous proposal to Lavinia and is repulsed by her. He shoots himself. In the end Lavinia speaking words of love to Peter, finds Adam's name on her lips. She breaks with Peter, orders the blinds of her house nailed shut, and goes into the house, to live there till her death. Justice has been done, the Mannon dead will be there and she will be there.

The Essential Pattern

Thus it is clear that Mourning Becomes Electra follows the pattern of the Greek trilogy in the essentials. The first play, entitled the Homecoming is closest to its original. It tells of the return of General Ezra Mannon (Agamemnon) from the Civil War, and of his murder by his wife, Christine (Clytemnestra), at the urging of her lover, Adam Brant (Aegisthus). And it ends with the confrontation of the mother by her daughter, Lavinia Mannon (Electra).

Difference between the Two Plays

Physically, the chief difference of the modern play from its original is that Christine and her lover do not stab the husband in his bath; she administers poison to him instead of the medicine he expects. But, if this difference of action seems minor, it points to a major difference of character, neither Ezra nor Christine Mannon shares the heroic stature of the Greek Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Ezra seems less the conquering hero than the lonely old man, and his guilt is disproportionally small—it is not the cruelty and self-willed pride of the Greek; it is only a puritanical failure to satisfy his wife in their love-relationship. And Christine shares neither the passionate hatred of Clytemnestra for her husband; nor her passionate love for Aegisthus. Rather she seems a neurotic, vindictive woman whose nature is poisonous rather than heroic. Although the first play explains the actions of the classical Agamemnon in modern psychological terms, it substitutes neurotic hatred for the full-blooded passion and violence of the original.

The Essential Outlines

The second play of the trilogy, entitled The Hunted also follows, the essential outlines of its Greek original. It centres upon the character of Orestes—now Orin Mannon, who has just returned from the war as this play begins. Confronted with the proof of his mother's guilt, Orin hunts down her lover and shoots him. But he does not murder his mother, as in the original Greek. Instead he tells her of her lover's death and confronts her with her guilt and with his own confused hatred of it, so that she is driven to commit suicide. The substitution of this suicide for the murder of the Greek original again emphasizes the anti-heroic nature of the modern protagonist. Nevertheless, in the case of Orin
(Orestes), “the Furies” which were externalized in the Greek myth, now have been realized more dramatically in the tortured conscience of the modern “hero” and in the psychological confusions of his mind. And these psychological Furies have been motivated more fully by the modern incident of Orin’s mad laughter and wounding in the war. Therefore Orin seems to be driven by the tortured conscience of all modern man, in their realization of the evil of world war.

Departures from the Greek Originals

The third play of the trilogy entitled The Haunted departs more radically and purposefully from the Greek originals. It centres upon the character of Electra rather than that of Orestes, and it ascribes to this new Electra the only heroism—and the only true tragedy—of the three plays. In the Greek, Electra had been married to a peasant farmer and had remained subordinate to her brother. But, in his earliest note for the future plays, O’Neill directed: “Give modern Electra “gure in play tragic ending worthy of character. In Greek story she peters out into undramatic married banality.” And throughout the planning and writing the trilogy he consistently developed this new conception until “Electra” became the title figure.

The Change of Action

Moreover, in changing the character of Electra from the Greek original, O’Neill also changed the action and the dramatic conception of the final play. Now, Orestes can no longer find absolution from the Furies which drive him (as he does in the Greek) ; he accepts damnation for the evil of his nature, and commits suicide, concluding : “The damned don’t cry !” But Electra triumphs over the evil of her heritage by recognizing it clearly, and by determining to live with it to the end: “I’m the last Mannon. I’ve got to punish myself.” And she begins her penance by telling Hannah “to throw out all the flowers”. She locks herself in with her memories : she will escape damnation by learning fully to understand her own past and how to “cry” or “mourn” for it. At the end the modern heroine regains her humanity by undertaking a tragedy greater than that of her ancestors. She, like her creator, begins her “long day’s journey into night”.
John Ashbery's Selected Poems

John Ashbery; 1927-Till Date

John Ashbery is recognized as one of the greatest twentieth-century American poets. He has won nearly every major American award for poetry, including the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the Yale Younger Poets Prize, the Bollingen Prize, the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, the Griffin International Award, and a MacArthur "Genius" Grant. Ashbery's poetry challenges its readers to discard all presumptions about the aims, themes, and stylistic scaffolding of verse in favor of a literature that reflects upon the limits of language and the volatility of consciousness. In the New Criterion, William Logan noted: "Few poets have so cleverly manipulated, or just plain tortured, our soiled desire for meaning. [Ashbery] reminds us that most poets who give us meaning don't know what they're talking about."

Ashbery's style—self-reflexive, multi-phonic, vaguely narrative, full of both pop culture and high allusion—has become "so influential that its imitators are legion," Helen Vendler observed in the New Yorker. Although even his strongest supporters admit that his poetry is often difficult to read and willfully difficult to understand, many critics have commented on the manner in which Ashbery's fluid style conveys a major concern in his poetry: the refusal to impose an arbitrary order on a world of flux and chaos. In his verse, Ashbery attempts to mirror the stream of perceptions of which human consciousness is composed. His poetry is open-ended and multi-various because life itself is, he told Bryan Appleyard in the London Times: "I don't find any direct statements in life. My poetry imitates or reproduces the way knowledge or awareness come to me, which is by fits and starts and by indirection. I don't think poetry arranged in neat patterns would reflect that situation. My poetry is disjunct, but then so is life." His poems move, often without continuity, from one image to the next, prompting some critics to praise his expressionist technique and others to accuse him of producing art that is unintelligible, even meaningless.

Ashbery's poetry—and its influence on younger poets—remains controversial because of just this split in critical opinion: some critics laud what Paul Auster described in Harper's as Ashbery's "ability to undermine our certainties, to articulate so fully the ambiguous zones of our consciousness," while others deplore his obscurantism and insist that his poems, made up of anything and everything, can mean anything and everything. Reflecting upon the critical response to his poem, "Litany," Ashbery once told Contemporary Authors, "I'm quite puzzled by my work too, along with a lot of other people. I was always intrigued by it, but at the same time a little apprehensive and sort of embarrassed about annoying the same critics who are always annoyed by my work. I'm kind of sorry that I cause so much grief."
W.S. Di Piero described the reaction of critics to Ashbery's style as "amusing. On the one hand are those who berate him for lacking the Audenesque 'censor' (that little editing machine in a poet's head which deletes all superfluous materials) or who accuse him of simply being willfully and unreasonably perverse. On the other hand are those reviewers who, queerly enough, praise the difficulty of Ashbery's verse as if difficulty were a positive literary value in itself, while ignoring what the poet is saying." Helen Vendler offered her summary of the debate in the New Yorker: "It is Ashbery's style that has obsessed reviewers, as they alternately wrestle with its elusive impermeability and praise its power of linguistic synthesis. There have been able descriptions of its fluid syntax, its insinuating momentum, its generality of reference, its incorporation of vocabulary from all the arts and sciences. But it is popularly believed, with some reason, that the style itself is impenetrable. . . An alternative view says that every Ashbery poem is about poetry."

"The Painter" by John Ashbery

**Introduction and Theme of the poem:** Ashbery's interest in painting led him to write this poem. The painter is fully representative of Ashbery's poetry. Ashbery uses a persona to reveal his poetic urge. The Painter is the mouthpiece of Ashbery. The poet uses cinematic images in the poem to make it as dynamic and visual as possible. The poem tells us that the painter is sitting between the sea and the tall buildings. He is attempting to create something impossible but remains unsuccessful. The people in the building encourage him to write common subject. He uses his wife as subject of his painting. He does it so exquisitely but again turns to his previous subject of sea. His efforts to paint the sea automatically are not realized and he is mocked by the people in the tall buildings. The painter is crucified by his subject. His desire of innovative and futuristic art remains only a prayer and longing. He is not able to achieve the extraordinary because of the ordinary demands of the audience.

The main theme of the poem is that innovator, modern and creative artists are crucified by the traditional and conventional people. This is not the only theme because the poem is to be understood at many different levels.

**A CRITIQUE OF THE PAINTER**

Ashbery’s poems are abstract paintings in words.

**Introduction:** John Ashbery uses painter as persona to present before us his conception of poetry. The painter like Ashbery is innovator and wants to capture the vitality of life rather than the mere surface transmit beauty of the same. The painter is the most representative of Ashbery’s poems and it is a key to understanding Ashbery both as and poet and artist. The painter breaks down the traditional and orthodox restrictions on the art laid by the classicists and wants to steal the essence of art. Ashbery is no moralist and conceives the art for its own sake. As the bird sings for its own sake, Ashbery writes in the same fashion. The poem has been composed in Sestina.
A Sestina is a form of rhymed or unrhymed poem of six stanzas of six lines and a concluding triplet in which the same six words at the line-ends occur in each stanza in six different sequences, apart from the final triplet, in which each line contains two of these words, one at the middle and one at the end. There are many salient features of the poem that we can analyse as under.

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT**

**Symbolic elements:** The poem is highly symbolic and packed with symbols that it seems like an allegory. The poem is not imaginative rather it is concrete pregnant with symbolic allusions:

-Sitting between the sea and the buildings  
He enjoyed painting the seas portrait. 
But just as children imagine a prayer 
Is merely silence, he expected his subject

The sea is a symbol of creativity and the unexplored depths of human consciousness. It also resents the vitality and essence or life, which has been long ignored. The buildings and their architecture are the explored and achieved conditions of art. The painter symbolizes the creative and modern urge and the people in the buildings are traditional critics who fail to understand the philosophy of art.

Symbolically, the poem shows the condition of the artist sandwiched between two contrasting forces behind art; conventional, traditional and superficial approach on the one hand and modern, creative, experimental and innovative on the other. The modern artist is not restricted by the limited and restrictive view of life. He is the controller of his art and defines its parameters. He believes that art is all-powerful and vast and it cannot be conceived in a traditional narrow thinking. His analogy is child’s prayer is not analogy only rather through it, he presents a philosophy of art. The artist should be a meditator and start art like a prayer. Ashbery knows;

-To rush up the sand, and, seizing a brush,  
Plaster its own portrait on the canvas.

is insane and even a common mind cannot entertain such an idea. So such conception of art in reality can be achieved only through prayer in silence. The difference between artificial art and vital art is presented by the artist with his back to the buildings and the face to the sea.

**Subjectivity and Objectivity**

-There was no paint on the canvas
Objective art is difficult to attain but it lends realism and universality to the artist’s masterpiece and the objective art is not bound by the artist, his consciousness or his artistic ability, so the painter meditated for long but nothing appeared on the canvas. The painter wanted either to paint objectively or nothing at all. He was an iconoclast, his representation of art must be perfect otherwise; he will be just another artist in the echoes of the millions of artists in the world. But the people in the were urging the artist to

Try using the brush
As a means to an end. Select, for a portrait,
Something less angry and large, and more subject
To a painter’s moods, or, perhaps, to a prayer

Because they were the upholders of the traditional art of subjectivity which was delimited by the artist’s mind and couldn’t survive in the limitless regions of the vast universe. This is the reaction of the traditional artists to the experimental nature of the modern artists.

Definition of Art: - The painter responds to the rationalists with a true conviction of a perfect artist in the following lines;

How could he explain to them his prayer
That nature, not art, might usurp the canvas?

The painter’s conception of art is like that of a child’s prayer which is a direct relationship between the artist and the art like that of a prayee to God. This concept cannot be materialized and explained to the traditionalists, for they cannot understand the artist’s avant-garde approach. The painter’s definition of artist that objective representation of reality must be the basis of art, the art confined by the artist’s feelings and emotions is not true and genuine. Soul, spirit, vitality of life, the essence of reality are the features which the painter is aspiring in his portrait. The painter further asserts:

My soul, when I paint this next portrait
Let it be you who wrecks the canvas.

Political and Religious Allegory: - Allegory is fictional literary narrative or artistic expression that conveys a symbolic meaning parallel to but distinct from, and more important than, the literal meaning. The Painter is both a political and religious allegory. The pathetic state of the painter lends political and social interpretations of the poem. The Communist Manifesto, the Puritan Theocracy, The Martial Laws and Hitlarian and Fascistic authorities all crucify the innovators and curb freedom of expression of those who champion a new cause for the welfare of humanity or art. The line:

Try using the brush for a means to an end
Shows the selfishness of the political gains. The writer should be a representative of a political party as well as was the case in Russia which demanded the Socialist Realism. The painter was a genuine artist who opposed these political and Hitlarian manifestos and their restrictions on art. He was a free agent and wanted freedom in his art, so he could easily attempt his poetic vision, but this freedom is not allowed as Ashbery depicts:

The news spread like a wild fire thought the buildings
He had gone back to the sea for his subject
Imagine a painter crucified by his subject.

The visionary painter was crucified by the so called custodians of political beliefs who never allowed a novelty or change which will pose a danger to their established government and systems. The poem was written in 1956—a period of tussle in which the freedom of action and thought was restrained by the Russian Communists. The poem tells a story of a painter who was a visionary and pioneer of a new approach in art which practically meant an opposition to the existing system or order so he was crucified or burnt at the stakes by the politicians.

The word ‘crucify’ has religious connotation so the poem becomes a religious allegory too. And reminds us of the story of Christ who brought a system of theocracy as a welfare to humanity but was rejected by the selfish so called chiefs of Judaism and was commanded by Pontius Pilate to be crucified for the political gains of Roman Empire. In this way, the innovates are punished in a society of selfishness, greed and power which denies welfare to humanity.

**Tragic Elements in the Painter:** - Ashbery is very akin to T.S. Eliot and Robert Frost. Most of his poems are like theirs speaking of sense of uncertainty, the looming fear, gloom and loneliness.

The atmosphere of fear, gloom and loneliness is also visible. The painter is alone with sense of gloomy uncertainty in his art for perfection. The sea symbolizes loneliness too. The people in the buildings have alienated the painter for his self-chosen seemingly impossible task rather than supporting him in his quest for the objective representation of reality. The painter is the protagonist feeling conflict sandwiched between traditions and modernity. All modern tragedies show conflict of the protagonist with society and its established norms and tragically doomed for this Hamartia that the protagonist bears. The painter is the protagonist working as opposed to the demands and conventions of society. The society may accept him if he becomes rational enough to understand the mere creative vision doesn’t suffice the creation. His Hamartia causes his crucifixion and ends the poem with tragic touches and a bit of Catharsis.

**Style, Technique and Imagery:** - The poem has been composed in an arresting and forceful. His technique to the poem is one such as employed by the abstract painters. So Ashbery’s rightly gives the concept of his poetry in the following words:
“My poems are paintings in words.”

His approach in the poem is objective rather than subjective. The diction is simple and relevant to the subject. John Ashbery is a perfect craftsman like Alexander Pope, Spenser, Tennyson and Surrey-Wyatt, the American examples being Richard Wilbur and Robert Frost. He is renowned for artistic galore in his poetry. His diction is simple and colloquial and must conform to the themes and ideas presented in the poem. The painter is no exception. All these stylistic features are perfectly applicable to the poem. All the key words which point to the main theme of the poem have been wrapped at the end to give them extra significance.

The imagery is fresh and startling. The images of sea, canvas, portrait and prayer all contribute to the thematic development of the poem.

**Conclusion:** The Painter is perfectly a representative of John Ashbery’s poems and a key to understanding his concepts regarding poetry. In Painter, Ashbery achieves artistic perfection with simplicity of diction. The painter can be interpreted at many different levels of understanding that is the beauty and charm of the poem. The language, themes, imagery and style make the poem an exquisite piece of literature. The title of the poem is also radically, very few poems would have been written with such titles. Ashbery combines surrealistic techniques of painting with poetic grandeur.

**John Ashbery's 'The Painter' as representative of the Avant-garde**

Avant-garde (From French, "advance guard") refers to people or works that are experimental or innovative, particularly with respect to art, culture, and politics. Avant-garde represents a pushing of the boundaries of what is accepted as the norm or the status quo, primarily in the cultural realm. The notion of the existence of the avant-garde is considered by some to be a hallmark of modernism, as distinct from postmodernism. It is often related with surrealism.

The Surrealist movement was founded in Paris by a small group of writers and artists who sought to channel the unconscious as a means to unlock the power of the imagination. Disdaining rationalism and literary realism, and powerfully influenced by Sigmund Freud, the Surrealists believed the conscious mind repressed the power of the imagination, weighting it down with taboos. Influenced also by Karl Marx, they hoped that the psyche had the power to reveal the contradictions in the everyday world and spur on revolution. Their emphasis on the power of the imagination puts them in the tradition of Romanticism, but unlike their forbears, they believed that revelations could be found on the street and in everyday life. The Surrealist impulse to tap the subconscious mind, and their interests in myth and primitivism, went on to shape the Abstract Expressionists, and they remain influential today.
Ashbery’s poems are ‘abstract paintings in words’. Ashbery is the most creative of all avant-gardes. His poems justify what he advocates in his prose or theoretical criticism. In fact Ashbery’s efforts were to unite the techniques of poetry and painting. While doing so he has to explain the similarities in these arts to their procedural outputs. In his view the practice of a painter is quite akin to a poet’s.

The movements in painting therefore had their special link to the movements in poetry. The Pinter is written in the light of surrealist art. Surrealism is a technique which used fantastic images and incongruous juxtapositions in order to represent unconscious thoughts and dreams.

“Sitting between the sea and the buildings
He enjoyed painting the sea’s portrait”

The touch of abstractism is seen in the painting of sea but in a poetic abstract way. What the painter wants to paint about sea is attempted by poets like Shelley in poetry. But the difference lies in the fact that the painting concerns our sense of seeing whereas poetry hearing and feeling as in ‘But just as children imagine a prayer’. It was surrealism the painter was trying to adopt as a theory. The most controversial of all surrealist aspects is its aspect of automatism. Ashbery in these lines gives a view of painter’s conception of this aspect. He wants the sea to rush up the sand and plaster its own portrait on the canvas. What comes next is Ashbery’s rejection of this view, ‘So there was never any paint on his canvas’. For him the possibility of automatism lies in its adopting some means. The canvas and brush are the means a painter adopts in painting. The means for a poet are the emotional overflow and conscious indulgence. What the people living in buildings advise him to do is the same Ashbery himself supports:

“Try using the brush
As a means to an end”

All poems are subject to automatism. But the automatism Ashbery defines is totally different from one the poets of generations have been practising. In his view, the selection of subject at least should not fall prey to automatism. The poet and the painter both should try to choose something intimate to their feelings and bents. The inability to choose such a subject is expressed in painter’s inability to explain his choice to the people, ‘How could he explain to them his prayer’. But to show the approach of the critics as genuine and practical, Ashbery presents his painter acting upon their suggestion, ‘He chose his wife for a new subject’. The success this time though unexpected comes to the painter and the portrait gets appreciated by the critics. As if forgetting itself, the portrait, ‘Had expressed itself without a brush’. It is in fact the practicability of theory that Ashbery wants to express. Surrealism in itself is not the genuine thing. If the painter or poet has mixed it with the artistic conscience it becomes genuine or practicable. The artistic conscience from art therefore should not be absent. All arts should be artistic in nature, and all artists should be artistical. Ashbery’s avant-garde approach is in this way quite clear. All experimental and innovational work should
not cease to artistic. Surrealist conceptions are in fact the initial stages of all conceptions. It is the genius of an artist that makes them different from the conceptions of a common person. The artistic efforts in all works of art should always be there. It is the artistic effort that gives some idea or vision an artistic genre. All conception before being adopted in form or medium may look the same. But it is the artistic effort that gives them form or medium. Further, the form or medium should not be considered enough to give some conception its artistic identity. Colours and canvas should not be considered enough to make some idea a portrait. It should be the approach of painter that should help make it painterly. The painter forgot to understand this point and tried to paint the portrait of sea again.

‘Slightly encouraged, he dipped his brush
In the sea, murmuring a heartfelt prayer’

In fact he forgot to understand that the portrait praised by the critics was painted up to the requirements of the medium. It was not the subject but the medium they had stressed upon. The sea is not less angry and large a subject. The sea is a subject, but to be less and large deals with the particularities of medium. So it was the medium they in fact talked about. The painter took it for subject and theory and started painted the portrait of sea again. The mode and attitude he adopted was again surrealist as in “My soul, when I paint this portrait”. If the news of his painting the sea spreads like a wildfire, it is because of painter’s inability to understand the true spirit of a theory. When he came to his old angry and large subject, he had to be disappointed again. The disappointment had become his ultimate fate as in ‘Imagine a painter crucified by his subject’. It simply means that the subject should not dominate and overcome the true spirit of an art. The medium and attitudes should always be accepted as true spirit of some art.

Ashbery’s avant-garde views are not totally strange for art. What Eliot says about the importance of individual talent in the supremacy of tradition is proved. Tradition does not mean modes and attitudes. It should also be meant in the sense of medium. Canvas and brush are the media of painting. An artist should not transcend his media. It shall simply mean that he is misled in his concepts. If the painter had not been too exhausted to lift his brush, he might have painted something up to the requirements of theory. The theorists refused to accept his efforts. They simply thought it non-professional. To remain and survive in the limits of art is the first requirement of art. If the artist breaks these limits and gets out of art he will never be accepted. All indications of a subject began to fade and the fate of to be out of art is to be dead in art. The sea devoured the canvas and the brush means the subject needs some medium.

**Basic concepts of art in ‘The Painter’**

In ‘The Painter’, Ashbery touches upon some of the basic concepts in imitative arts. He does not attempt a poetic reconciliation of the warring schools of criticism. Rather he presents a situation in which the artistic creativity may come in direct conflict with the
demands of modern society. The poem presents the situation of an artist who wants to paint the sea. His ambition is to present the sea rather than paint it. He wants that “nature, not art, might usurp the canvas”

Ashbery concludes that such an ambition would result in a total denial of modern urban values and would be met with violent rejection. Ashbery establishes a relation between the sea and the buildings in the very beginning of the poem. The artist sits between the symbols of nature and the urban jungle of cement and steel. He was enjoying his work and expected that his subject would easily yield to creative reproduction, but his expectations were thwarted. Reality refused to be captured so easily by art. Ashbery compares his ambition to children’s view of prayer showing the simplicity of his desire. Ashbery contrasts the artist’s expectation to realistic theory of art asserting that even the most naturalistic presentation of life is still not nature as it exists in a different medium which changes its attributes. The artist with this realization is unable to present reality and so “there was never any paint on the canvas”

Ashbery contrasts the artist with the people in the buildings. He emphasizes the basic difference between their modes of thinking. They want to “put him to work” desiring him to paint something less “angry and large”, something “more subject to a painter’s mood”. It is obvious that they consider art to be an imitative skill in the service of urban, commercial interests. It is “more subject to…a prayer” or as one may say ‘an order’. The concept of presentation of reality in the sense that reality may actually “usurp” the canvas is alien to them. The artist’s choosing his wife for a subject and making her “vast” is Ashbery’s way of defining bathos. Ashbery being a gay poet could hardly have expressed matrimonial love in any other way. However this time it was as if the portrait “Had expressed itself without a brush”. With this encouragement the artist now arises to paint with seawater, letting the medium of reality to be the medium of artistic expression. This was as if the artistic creation would “wreck the canvas”, putting an end to the illusion of presentation and letting the reality to be expressed without any alien medium of expression. This new mode of creation in which the artist is overtaken by his subject is blasphemous to the people in the buildings who consider it to be the case of “a painter crucified by his subject”. Others declare it the egotistical expression of the artist’s self and not presentation of reality. The work of the artist is such that: “all indication of subject began to fade”

Immaculate reality untouched with art is the final expression and provokes a destructive violent response form the people of the buildings. The portrait is tossed into the sea where it becomes one with its subject and thus the expression of the subject remains a prayer. The poem presents many contrasting views related to art and its relation to reality and society. Ashbery finds an appropriate locale for the presentation of ideological discord. The artist sits between the sea and the buildings, i.e., between nature and the urban civilization. The buildings are tall and overcrowded, apt representation of overpopulated urban scene. The tallness of the buildings also reflects the way the people look down upon the artist. But the artist has his back to the buildings. His independence of thought is met with advice from the buildings. People want to “put him to work”.

Prepared by Atta Ur RahmanJadoon 03335499069
Ashbery with his usual figurative way of presentation makes the artist paint his wife whom he makes “vast, like ruined buildings”

He very cleverly hides whether the portrait of the wife was made in paint on the canvas or if it was a real-life portrait. The poem makes use of figurative language throughout thus making every simple detail stand for a more complex thought related with theory of art. Phrases like “sea’s portrait, plaster its own portrait on the canvas, the brush as means to an end, usurp the canvas. As if forgetting itself the portrait, had expressed itself without a brush, wrecks the canvas, crucified by his subject, all indications of a subject began to fade, to howl, that was also a prayer, the sea devoured the canvas and the brush”, all have figurative meanings expressing or reflecting significant artistic concepts. Ashbery uses the word prayer several times, in this poem every time meaning something different. The artist’s prayer and the people’s howl which was also a prayer have contrasted meanings and so Ashbery uses the same word to mean different things to show how reality can be seen from many different perspectives.

Conclusively, Ashbery’s interest in painting led him to write this poem. The painter is fully representative of Ashbery’s poetry. Ashbery used a persona to reveal his poetic urge. The poet uses cinematic images in the poem to make it as dynamic and visual as possible. The Painter’s desire of innovative and futuristic art remains only a prayer and longing. He is not able to achieve the extraordinary because of the ordinary demands of the audience. The main theme of the poem is that innovator, modern and creative artists are crucified by the traditional and conventional people.

**Critically Analysis of the poem : The Painter**

Ashbery makes a genuine effort to portray the poetic vision of an artist’s mind by concentrating on the dictum "ut pictura poesis" --"as is painting, so is poetry". Through poetry he glorifies a mere painter’s struggle to find his true artistic form and inclination towards a specific way of being creative in "The Painter".

“For some people the fear of inner torment is such that the desire to create has to be repressed: ‘He does not embark on any serious pursuits commensurate with his gifts lest he fails to be a brilliant success. He would like to write or paint but does not dare to start’ (Horney 107). Or if the desire to create is not repressed, the creative process will be wracked with anxiety or hampered by self torment.” This quote from the book Therapeutic dimensions of autobiography in creative writing by Celia Hunt aptly captures to some extent the condition the painter in the poem goes through, who seems confused on whether to draw the painting of the sea or not. And how this feat of capturing the sea can be achieved.

A similar theme is also tackled by the great American poet, Emily Dickinson. In her short poem she writes: “Artists wrestle here! /Lo, a tint Cashmere! /Lo, a Rose! /Student of the Year! /For the easel here/Say Repose!” This poem lays bare the fact that the artist always juggles with his tools and crafts in order to create what he wants. For him to
relax is unthinkable likewise the painter in the poem faces a lot of troubles in making this special piece of art (the sea). The painter seems to self actualize himself by materializing the urge to paint a portrait of the sea which will give the chaos of his creative world a poetic and appeasing feeling.

Ashbery is known for his surrealist poetry and in "The Painter" he uses his skill to masterfully create connections between varied images. Using the modified form of sestina (last words of the verses are mostly changed) he is able to make these images jump into a creative hotchpotch. But the irony of the poem is that the artist portrayed in the poem seems to go through a rough patch in his life yet the creativity by which the poet himself writes, speaks volume of about the work of art he produces; the poet is able to create with the painter in the poem a smooth imagery of an artist's struggle towards his creative independence—a mere human's effort to fight for what he deems right. In order to fulfill his creative vision he goes against all the odds set by the society. Ashbery was himself a painter and his surrealist automatic writing in the poem seems to give power to the automatic drawing the painter is trying to achieve in the poem, as the artist wishes: "he expected his subject / To rush up the sand, and, seizing a brush, / Plaster its own portrait on the canvas.

Interpretation of this poem is complicated. On the surface level one can judge what is happening but on a deeper level the reader may not be able to interpret the unfathomable depth. One reason quite evident is the surrealism employed. Just like the artist’s mind the poem is also free of conscious control. It takes on its own route and it paints with its own brush strokes with the artist’s creative vision.

Ashbery takes into account many aspects of syntax and rhyme in his poetry and one of it is the repetition of words. The reader may not notice immediately about it but after a careful examination it comes to light that, Ashbery repeats the word "canvas", "buildings", "brush", "subject", "prayer" seven times and "portrait" eight times in the poem. This repetition creates a surrealistic effect in the poem.

The painter in the poem is on the beach and contemplates his tempestuous subject. Sea here symbolizes the freedom, the chaos, the harmony of the waves and the creative space for the painter. The sea symbolizes freedom as it liberates the painter from the hustle bustle of the city life behind him ("the building"). The painter is like a child imagining a prayer. His innocent imagination muses over what to draw on his canvas. Though the painter loves to paint the sea but he is confused by the daunting question of how to draw and live in one’s own creative vision, how to capture the universe around us. Even though he has brush in his hand but his canvas seems empty, this paint-less canvas brings out the fact that the painter himself has lost his creative vision, or he is going through the phase of imagination blockage and he is unable to take a plunge into mind’s eye where haphazard brushes could be waved like a magic wand and a beauty of its own kind would emerge into a classic piece of art. His lack of strength to take on a decision leads the people around him to take control of his mind. They ask him to make a portrait of “Something less angry and large”, that is to say; do not draw the sea due to
its turbulent nature and gargantuan effect which is unfathomable by human mind to capture. The painter seemed unable to convey "his prayer" to the people that he wants "nature, not art, [to] usurp the canvas".

The skillful painter then tries to paint his wife. He does that without really making a creative endeavour because she seemed a ruined building in the first place that is not something he would want to paint. He does make an attempt, though unwillingly. It is throttling to the painter as an artist is a free will creature and no matter what happens he has to go to his roots of desire that is he has to be a creative by not conforming to traditionalists. He has to fulfill his urge to create his own tradition. His desire to go back to the sea appears to be the only right thing to do.

"Imagine the painter crucified by his subject." signifies a powerful figure that could draw faultlessly the things he see, and be astonished and spiritualized by the creative vision he has with the drawing. The painter in the poem proves his creative vision and creative authority when “He provoked some artists leaning from the buildings”; suggesting their eagerness to stick to the roots; the traditional way of painting. The poet clearly implies that the traditional painters are bent towards following an authority by which they could judge the painter and his work.

The people, the critics and the painters of traditional sort did not appreciate the effort of the painter and thus life’s way of taking the unconventional approach irrationally by not getting accepted by his own people fell upon the painter as they threw the portrait of the sea from the tallest building. This “portrait” symbolizes something that the people, the critics and the painters of his age were not able to handle the pressure posit on them by the painter or his creative vision of the sea. Such non-conformist and cavalier attitude is also visible in Ashbery’s life, as he nonchalantly says that his goal is "to produce a poem that the critic cannot even talk about.”

In the end of the poem “the sea devoured the canvas and the brush”. It signifies that the portrait drawn by a mere artist cannot be fathomed by man himself because chaos of the sea is unfathomable and it was as if “his subject had decided to remain a prayer”. Thus the freedom and turbulence the sea entails with it consumes man’s creation as well. The chaos of the world cannot be painted in a canvas, at least people around them would not let the painter do that, yet his creative drive would urge him to create what he instinctively desires. Neither the painter would stop nor would the chaos around him end. The cycle of life would go on like this.

A CRITIQUE OF MELODIC TRAINS

Introduction: - The poem shows melodically sounding related series of thoughts that are developing in your mind. They are called Melodic trains for they have the power to transform the minds of people from some ordinary experience to some particular. The poem is a fine example of stream of consciousness technique.
The poem shows the complexity of thoughts as they pass through a sensitive mind of a poet. A poetic mind has a great capacity for associating this similar and distinct thought. That is why; the poem has more than one layer of meaning. The title itself suggests the thought process growing on within the poet’s mind. The outer journey in her real train is paralleled by a symbolic train of thoughts and melodies, poetic ideas running through the mind.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

Vanities expressed through appearances: - The first thought or theme present in the poem is the expression of vanities through appearances, when the little girl in the stanza asks the poet what time it is:

A little girl with scarlet enameled fingernails
Asks me what time it is—evidently that’s a toy wristwatch
She’s wearing, for fun. And it is fun to wear other
Odd things, like this briar pipe and tweed coat

It is surprising how children satisfy their vanity with toys and fake objects, which cannot fulfill their need. The toy watch doesn’t tell the time. It is not only children but adults also do the same and are caught up in vanities and appearances. The poet discovers that the color of his overcoat resembles the color of brown mountains; in fact the seams of his coat actually look like the white paths running down the slopes of the mountains. His thoughts drifting to his clothes suddenly discover that clothes are like a mask hiding the reality. Just as one cannot find out the reality under the clothes, we cannot find the reality of the appearances. The theme of appearance and reality and the vanities to satisfy one’s self on fake foundations starts right from the beginning. Delight in seemingly beautiful objects without any special unity is what associates the elders with the youngers because psychologically, they are the same. Basic instinct, at all levels, remains the same all over the world regardless of race, age, region or nation. But it is very difficult to understand human psychology only by appearances. As far as the appearances are concerned, we are all children. This is only one of the ideas and feelings that the poet experiences while traveling in the train.

The process of meditation and Meaning in Life: - Though Melodic Trains is Ashbery’s secondary work, yet it was hailed as ‘Marvelous’ by David Bromwich and ‘great’ by Hollander. The poem is highly personal and in the words of Huybernsz, ‘throws the reader out of the poem’. According to one critic, the poem suggests ‘the premise of this marvelous poem is a journey around New York City.’ The opening metaphor is that of music which sets the poet in meditation and find meanings in life. The main purpose in life seems, how to live and what to do?

This process of meditation begins when a little girl asks the poet time. The poet is attracted towards the jagged peaks of the mountains by the seams of his coat and later caught up in the humdrum of everyday life. Rather than a meaning, the poet finds
confusion, crowds and tensions everywhere. A sense of entrapment encapsulates us, we find surrounded by troubles all around us and find no way out. The Pisa figures ultimately end this process of mediation and life seems a perpetual struggle against the odds of society. We keep oscillating between the complex beginning and peaceful end and sometimes, peaceful begging and complex and disturbing end.

**Symbolic Elements – Melodic Trains as drama of life:**

Only the wait in stations is vague and Dimensionless, like oneself. How do they decide how much Time to spend in each?

*One beings to suspect there’s no Rule or that it’s applied haphazardly.*

Next the train takes turns like a pencil and the poet experiences that life too is like a train full of complexity and running to its destination – death. As in an ordinary journey, the strain stops at various stations for brief moments. We also pause at some state of life before turning into a new direction. The faces of the passengers standing outside the platforms of different stations melt into the faces of those million faces, the poet reads different expressions. Some carry on eternal sadness. Some reflect disillusionment with life and its receptive appearance; some show anxiety about the future. There are questions in every mind. Will the taxi be available; will someone come to welcome me? These and many others perplex the mind of travelers. As the following lines show:

*Sadness of the faces of children on the platform,*
*Concern of the grownups for connections, for the chances Of getting a taxi, since these have no timetable.*
*You get one if you can find one though in principle*

These questions asked in ordinary life reflect those questions in the next world. The poet contemplates some spiritual and metaphysical issues at this point. The complexities of the world symbolize those of the hereafter and regarding the future of man in the next world. The is haphazard dimension in life which disturbs all routines and the same is to be found on the Day the Judgment when this haphazardness blends into a unique Death which rampages everything on the earth.

One of these issues is the role of chance in the course of life. Although, chance is just a segment of the total certainty, but chance govern a large part of our existence. The total existence of human activity is controlled by chance, which may be termed as Fate.

Chance, fate, stages of journey and chorus lets us enter into the drama of life which is more visible in the following remarkable lines:

*It’s as though a visible chorus called up the different Stages of the journey, singing about them and being them*
The train journey becomes a semblance to the drama in real life. As the play has acts and chorus as the character, so is the situation here. Every man and woman along with their family members act as chorus throughout all the stages of their life – tragic or comic may be.

**Oneness and Identification**

*The platform or waiting to board the train are my brothers*

In a way that really wants to tell me why there is so little Panic and disorder in the world, and so much unhappiness. If I were to get down now to stretch, take a few steps

Realizing the basic anxieties of the heart, the poet feels complete oneness and identification with the fellow travelers. Since this journey symbolizes life. It is a moment of human unity which the poet experiences. He wonders whether complete communication between the individual and community is possible. The journey of train is taken lightly by the little girl and the likes, but for the poet is a serious activity, perhaps a moment of contemplation which he identifies himself with the fellow travelers who also share the same problems and who are also human beings like himself. They are like brothers, as poet calls them and require our perfect sympathy and attention. And we need to convince each other because if there is little panic and disorder, why are we creating for ourselves. Sometimes, it is our attitude that makes us tense rather than the tension itself. The gap that exists between one man and the other in the modern period can be only bridged if communication barriers, such as alienation, estrangement and personal entrapment are removed.

The symbolic journey of the train ends when the poet receives a warm welcome and as the journey of the train stops, the melodic trains of his mind also stop as depicted in the following lines:

**Of good fortune and colossal welcomes from the mayor and Citizens’ committees tossing their hats into the air**

**Style, Imagery and Technique:** The poet employs a traditional image of train journey to denote life and its non-stop voyage. There are also associated images such as station, marking a temporary stopover and passengers representing fellow human beings. The images of toy and enameled nails signify the theme of false appearances and deceptions. This idea is further enhanced by the Big White Apples or the fumes of the train covering up the platform. The poem is a good example of stream of consciousness technique the poem’s start immediately by the little girl’s question about time began to express might issues like mortality, chance and time.

The poem is perfectly a representative of modern American Sensibility. The striking images of tweed coat and its seams and the enameled nails of the little girl are such powerful images that they transpose us to the very place in whose imagination, the poem was written. The natural imagery of date-palm trees and the Alps lend freshness
to poem in contrast to the artificial imagery of tweed coat and enameled nails. The image of Pisa Tower is a true reflective the modern man’s psychological complexities. Melodic trains, in terms of images, techniques, symbols and style is a modern piece of poetry.

**Conclusion:** Melodic Trains is a fine piece of poetry in which the poet addresses a number of issues, political, social, familial and psychological. It is a journey of life and the end of the journey ends in optimism and happiness on the typical note of ‘Welcome Home!’ Even then the complexities of life surround us because home introduces new problems for us, the end of the poem is only a temporary happy moment of life.

The poem imparts a deep philosophy of life. Life is full of restlessness, tensions and discontentment, but it is also true that most of the problems in life are caused by the insane attitude of modern man.

Clouds of anxiety, of sad, regretful impatience
With ourselves, our lives, the way we have been dealing
With other people up until now. Why couldn’t
We have been more considerate?

Clouds of anxiety are scattered everywhere, at each stop. During these anxious moments, we create more trouble for other people and forget that there are also humans like us and demand our full sympathy and respect. The poet raises the issue of sympathy and its importance in everyday life. Haste and race has spread panic and disorder in our mechanical life. The hurry to reach home makes life only complex rather than solve any practical issue.

**‘Melodic Train’ : A Post-Modern Poem reflecting Complexities of Urban Life**

John Ashbery traces the factors, which directly influence and alter attitude of the modern man in day-to-day situations. Thus Ashbery brings before us the complexities of urban life, discussing the social, political and psychological issues along with personal trains of feelings of the poet.

The Melodic Trains is written in the perspective of modern American society. The social aspects are discussed on an emotional scale. The temperament, attitude and behaviour of modern man are dependent on circumstances and transubstantiations. The feelings of poet remain else-oriented. He does not feel anything irrelevant to his surroundings. The self is replaced by else all the time.

The first feelings he gives while sitting in the train are about the girl wearing enameled finger nails. A little girl with scarlet enameled fingernails asks me what time it is—evidently that’s a toy wristwatch she’s wearing for fun. And it is fun to wear other
Odd things, like this briar pipe and tweed coat

Like date-coloured Sierras with the lines of seams Sketched in and plunging now and then into unfathomable Valleys that can’t be deduced by the shape of the person Sitting inside it—me,

What he feels about or for this girl is totally social or impersonal. He reckons his look and position from outside. The girl is not funny in herself. Likewise the poet is not funny in himself. He is funny for other people – and that too with respect to their own judgment. The way and the comparison he uses to convey his opinion about himself is however quite modern. In nature anyhow they are too American to be global. We can say that these are not the feelings of a common man. But they are expressed in so impersonal a way that they look familiar enough to be of a common man. The artistic involvement of the poet in the expression of these feelings makes them poetic and general.

The concept of distance however is dealt with a philosophical touch. It is also enhanced by a brisk comparison.

and just as our way is flat across
Dales and gulches, as though our train were a pencil
Guided by a ruler held against a photomural of the Alps
We both come to see distance as something unofficial
And impersonal yet not without its curious justification
Like the time of a stop watch

The distance is not without its curious justification yet it is unofficial and impersonal because the poet and the girl are not in their usual mood and behaviour. The words 'unofficial' and 'impersonal', however, seem opposites of each other. How one can be unofficial and impersonal at the same time? This is the question that we feel ourselves unable to solve. But this what the poet has taken as a model theme for his poem. The dilemma of a modern man is to be unofficial and impersonal at the same time. The people sitting in the train are unofficial because they are not on their usual places. And they are impersonal because they are involved with the other people going to their particular journeys separately. The distance or journey is like the time of a stop watch – right twice a day. It temporary and momentary. It makes one unofficial and impersonal at the same time. As the distance has a curious justification it is not dimensionless.

Only the wait in stations is vague and
Dimensionless, like oneself.

The wait in the stations on the other hand is vague and dimensionless. It is so because it was not calculated and perhaps is never calculated.

How do they decide how much Time to spend in each? One begins to suspect there’s no Rule or that it’s applied haphazardly.
The dimensionlessness of this wait is conveyed through the extrovert social behaviour of the people. One thinks about others when one is in trouble.

Thematically the poet has shifted himself from relaxed to tense feelings. This is what the modern poets practice very commonly. The themes are mostly sense, emotion and feeling oriented. These elements were there in the old poets also. But they had not made them the bases of their poems. Theirs were mostly thought oriented. It was the poetic thought that inspired them to write not the poetic feelings. The poetic thoughts aroused in them the poetic feelings and they wrote in a spontaneous over flow of powerful feelings. But it used to be thoughts they wrote not feelings. With the modern poets the things are different a little bit. Their feelings inspire them to write. These are the feelings they experience first not the thoughts. This is why the reader of a modern poetry will feel himself sensitively mature not thought wise. The theme of this poem is therefore the feelings of a modern man or so many modern men. The poet has conveyed their feelings through feelings not through thoughts.

Sadness of the faces of children on the platform, Concern of the grownups for connections, for the chances of getting a taxi, since these have no timetable.

It is not the thought that the taxis have no timetable but a feeling. The taxis of course have their timetable but the person speaking this thought is in a state of mind that suffices to convert his thoughts into feelings.

This approach towards themes and topics is very common in modern poets. What makes this approach truly American is the logical way they convey it to you.

You get one if you can find one though in principle
You can always find one,

This is further the style they convey their feelings and thoughts through. The interference of thoughts in the depiction of feelings however is imperceptibly constant. What Ashbery gives as a logical explanation of his feelings is felt as a piece of philosophy.

but the segment of chance
In the circle of certainty is what gives these leaning
Tower of Pisa figures their aspect of dogged
Impatience, banking forward into the wind.

We can say the style has rendered simple poetic feelings and thoughts to those of philosophical ones. But this is not true. One becomes philosophical when one feels and thinks so deeply. It is in fact the depth of feelings that is conveyed in so philosophical a mode not the philosophy itself.

In short any stop before the final one creates
Clouds of anxiety, of sad, regretful impatience  
With ourselves, our lives, the way we have been dealing  
With other people up until now. Why couldn’t  
We have been more considerate?

The outcome of deep feelings at the level of expression or thinking is philosophy. But at the level of feelings it is anxiety. The deeper we feel the more anxious we become.

The anxiety, however, results in an expression of modern attitude towards various directions. It seems as if the modern people are always ready to be annoyed and worried. The variance in thoughts and feelings has made them impatient with their surroundings. They seem no more tolerant and considerate. But actually it has become their second nature. It has become a part of their feelings and expressions. The sooner they get anxious the less latter they get relaxed.

These figures leaving the platform or waiting to board the train are my brothers in a way that really wants to tell me why there is so little Panic and disorder in the world, and so much unhappiness.

The lines though thematic in nature yet indicate the feelings of a person who see these people in such a tense condition. They are not philosophic in any way. They result from the complex interplay of feelings the modern poets are so adept in. This is what Ashbery wants to say – the complexity of modern mind at the level of sensitive sights. It seems as if the modern man starts thinking when gets tense and confused. In the same way the other men start feelings when they see tension and confusion. The problem is not of identity but of individuality. They do not know where they become different from others and similar to them. Why does the poet feel different from what the people at platform do? Because he is sitting in the train and the others are standing outside at the platforms. The difference in their resulted thoughts is the difference in their identity. What the poet feels in the above and the following lines is the crisis of identity. In the first stage he feels them unjustified. But in the second desirous to be one of them.

If I were to get down now to stretch, take a few steps  
In the wearying and world-weary clouds of stream like great  
White apples, might I just through proximity and aping  
Of postures and attitudes communicate this concern of mine to them?

The poet’s concern to the people is not of individuality but of identity – identity in the sense of similarity. But he is so much conscious of his position that he seems failed to find out any similarity. What he will do to them shall be a kind of aping. The description of the way he will get down and reach the people is however American. This attitude is symbolic of the attitude of whole nation – and perhaps of the whole modern community. The points of concern he wants to communicate are however very individualistic.

That their jagged attitudes correspond to mine,
That their beefing strikes answering silver bells within
My own chest, and that I know, as they do, how the last
Stop is the most anxious one of all, though it means
Getting home at last, to the pleasures and dissatisfactions of home?
These are the similarities that strengthen the individualities.

It's as though a visible chorus called up the different stages of the journey, singing about them and being them: The visible chorus in the different stages of journey is not only particular about itself but also about the others. The members of chorus are different and similar at the same time.

Not the people in the station, not the child opposite me
With currant fingernails, but the windows, seen through,
Reflecting imperfectly, ruthlessly splitting open the bluish
Vague landscape like a zipper.

The difference is not that of the position but of scenic background the people sitting in train are covered in and the people waiting at platforms are not.

Each voice has its own descending scale to put one in one's place at every stage: One need never know where one is Unless one give up listening, sleeping, approaching a small Western town that is nothing but a windmill.

This is how the people sitting in the train and those waiting at the platforms are the same. Their voices put them in one another's place and one loses ones identity in the clouds of anxiety.

Then
The great fury of the end can drop as a solo
Voices tell about it, wreathing it somehow with an aura
Of good fortune and colossal welcomes from the mayor and
Citizen's tossing their hats into the air.
To hear them singing you'd think it had already happened
And we had focused back on the furniture of the air.

In this perspective it looks very strange that the difference remained only up to the difference in position. As soon as the passengers get down they forget all their anxieties and worries. A new situation seems waiting to devour them. With the change in positions the people are transformed from one set of feelings to another – from one set of differences to another, from one set of similarities to another. Things seem taking place at momentary scales. The identities and individualities are but momentary. They seem depending on some particular sets of conditions and situations. The advantages and disadvantages are but timely. Change the positions and get the newer sets of identities. What the poet is in the beginning remains no more so in the middle and end. It simply
means the people sitting beside in the train and waiting at the platforms will also be different from their present ones.

The poem is so perfect in theme and treatment that it seems dealing with nearly all the modern problems and issues. The life of a modern man is hinted from all sides. The canvas though social in extension yet outlines with domestic contrasts.

**Melodic Trains : Critical Evaluation**

In the poem Melodic Train the narrator is boarding inside a train. There is a little girl beside him. He can see the scenes and people passing by as the train travels ahead. The journey doesn't end; nor is it any meaningful.

The poem is the sum totality of the ruminations of the speaker about anything that occurs to his mind, when it is provoked (consciously and unconsciously) to think about them. He ‘happens to’ think about many different types of things, some of which are important and the others are all nonsense. But why should one be selective? The speaker thinks about so many and all unrelated things, but he seems to be (perhaps not very conscious) mainly preoccupied with the ideas about the nature of reality, the human mind, life and anxiety, time and change.

In the first stanza, the random thoughts and ruminations of the man give us an almost clear idea about the occasion. Sitting in a train, he notices a little girl wearing nail polish, when she asks what time it is. He also notices that the child is also wearing a watch, but it is a toy watch, that tells the accurate time twice a day! This kind of description immediately tells us the nature of this special kind of poetic meditation. But, he compares himself with the girl when he says that it is fun for him to wear the kind of clothes he is wearing, as it is fun for the girl to put on a toy watch. But as he looks carelessly at his clothes, his mind indulges in another ‘useless’ thought; he feels that the stripes on his shirt are submerging into the valleys of the background color and coming out down there again! He links even that fantastic thought with his childhood memory of making a train out of a pencil and letting it run along the edge of a scale (perhaps with an imitative noise!)

In the middle of the third stanza, the subject abruptly changes. He begins to think about ‘distance’. This kind of sudden changes of subject matter is typical of the free thought that goes on in the mind all day long. There is no logic, structure, grammar, rules or anything of the sort in the mind. The thought about time merges into a wonder about time. The speaker links time with the stopped watch again; the logic is however inverted. Then he somehow begins to think about ‘wait’; “only the wait in stations is dimensionless, like oneself”. After some time – it seems that the train has reached another stop – he talks about the sad faces of (homeless?) children. In the typical ‘surrealistic’ manner, he links (without any logical connection) taxis to the ruminations. Within this seemingly very serious, indeed philosophical concern about chance and the final stop (death) in life, however, there is something that cannot be sanely related to
the ongoing strain of thoughts: “…..circle of uncertainty is what gives these leaning tower of Pisa figures their aspect of dogged impatience, banking forward into the wind”!

After these many shifts in the subject of the poem, within stanzas and within the lines, and after many insignificant and unrelated issues coming and going randomly in and out of the poet’s mind, he happens to think about one thing that is serious, starting at about line 32, but even that is told in an inverted manner: “why is there so ‘little’ panic and disorder in the world.” He then thinks of how he can convey the many concerns and worries of his mind to others. As we move ahead, it becomes more and more difficult to untangle the threads of thoughts. “They become more and more jumbled, unrelated to each other in any way. What the reader needs to do is to go on guessing what the worry may be in the speaker’s mind; and that is possible if we understand that he is a modern man vexed with many problems and a poetic sort of personality who meditates over them in an emotive manner. The poem develops to become more surrealistic; there are more fantastic ideas like “furniture of the air”, as we read on.

The title of the poem suggests that it is about a train journey, and it really is in the literal sense. But with the rhythm of the train, there are also the rhythm of the thought process, and the rhythm of some kind of music. The poem is made of a set of unrelated ruminations, somehow anchored on a tentative situation of a train journey and somehow associatively related by the concerns of a man thinking over life, time, and chances and so on. The digressive “train” of thoughts is sometimes childish and sometimes philosophical, as the mind actually is.

The persona compares human gatherings of platforms with chorus singing about various stages of the journey of life. Here he is not concerned about the distinct faces of people standing on stops bout blurring faces lost in the landscape. Both people and scene become one and united. It is an implication of how human life is unified with nature, both being inseparably knitted together. One does not know his position because he is not aware of where he is while the train is moving. The poet now comes down to earth and pictures the atmosphere which surrounds him after he gets off the train; warm colossal welcomes from mayors and citizens and their choric song. He calls it the ‘furniture of the air’ which is a philosophical remark about human life; it is a dream too short lived.

**Major themes in Ashbery’s Poetry**

Poet and critic, who has deeply influenced American poetry from the 1970s. Ashbery is the best-known poet of the "New York School." His work is characterized by originality, impressionistic elegance, and dark themes of death and terror as evidenced by his lines, ‘The locking into place is death’. In the 1950s Ashbery adopted to his poetry techniques used by such abstract painters as Willem Kooning and Jackson Pollock.

In 'The Painter', we see surrealistic techniques employed. He also was interested in the music of John Cage and his poem, ‘Melodic Trains’ has been written in a musical-musing
style. Charles Altieri, in ‘Self and Sensibility in Contemporary American Poetry’, labels Ashbery “the major poet of our minor age”. Ashbery himself commented in ‘The Invisible Avant-Garde’, that “Artists are no fun once they have been discovered” and it seems that his poetry is an attempt to elude what Eliot called “the lemon squeezing school of criticism”. The main purpose of Ashbery’s poetry as Ashbery himself asserted is:

"to record a kind of generalized transcript of what's really going on in our minds all day "

The best example is ‘Melodic Trains’ which is innovative and based on stream of consciousness technique recording a real transcript of our minds. Elusiveness perhaps best describes Ashbery’s poetry. His poems are difficult reading for those weaned in the early 20th century poetry. Landscapes dominate Ashbery’s poems. His pictures are always laid against the backdrops of vast landscapes, as the train is against the photomural of the Alps in Melodic Trains. Ashbery often writes by assuming a persona i.e. a character who narrates the story but who is distinctly not the poet. As a result we have many different personalities talking to us in his poetry and none of them can be confidently attributed to the poet himself. We have a good example of this in the traveler in a tweed coat and holding a briar pipe in Melodic Trains who may be Ashbery but he is soon lost in a multitude. By assuming this persona, Ashbery is able to bring in all the social voices he needs to paint the landscape of experience in American society. Ashbery substantiated this when he said. “Poetry includes anything and everything”. It is very difficult to categorize either Ashbery himself or his poems. Though Ashbery is a 20th Century Post-modernist yet we find so much diversity in respect of his technique and subject-matter that at one end, he seems classic like Elizabethans and at another, he seems much like romanticists such as Wordsworth and Coleridge. But I think he is best reserved for his avant-garde approach as asserted in the following lines from ‘The Painter’:

“How could he explain to them his prayer
That nature, not art, might usurp the canvas?”

Another technique used by Ashbery is to echo other poets, to borrow their style, phrases or images to establish a link or to draw an ironical relation between their and his point of view. He has been known to echo Stevens, Eliot, Pound, and the Romantics. As David Perkins points out in On Ashbery’s Predecessors “for both Stevens and Ashbery the imagination creates, destroys and immediately creates another vision of reality”. We see this in ‘The Painter’ where the version of reality of the sea cannot be conveyed in paints and the artist needs a different medium to do that while his concern is that nature and not art might usurp the canvas. Sometimes Ashbery uses voices of other poets. David Perkins points out “he adopts or alludes to a style in order to invoke the tone of feeling associated with it….he exhibits the modern colloquial voices of different types of people”. ‘The Painter’ thus seems to be a direct echo from Browning’s many poems on the subject of art. We have echoes here of ‘Fra Lippo Lippi’ when the protagonist was criticized for finding his subjects in real life and was asked to make his portraits reflect the soul and
not the body. Ashbery’s subjects are “not doings in the world but in the mind”. In Melodic Trains the journey exists in the poet's mind and he mingles humour with pathos, resignation with hope, and maintains his relaxed, and wonderfully imaginative, speech despite premises that might have led to despair. The anguish of the passengers of the train is shared by the poet but their anxiety and “dogged impatience lead the poet to say:

“These figures leaving
The platform or waiting to board the train are my brothers....”

Ashbery’s poetry brings us to strange metaphors and shifts in descriptions. The clouds of smoke in Melodic Trains are ‘wearying and world weary’ and look like ‘great white apples’. The tweed coat with its pattern is likened to ‘date-coloured Sierras’ while the lines of seams plunge into ‘unfathomable Valleys’. The figures may not always be this difficult as the anxiety-laden passengers on the platform look like Tower of Pisa figures though their ‘dogged impatience’ makes them look like determined birds ‘banking forward into the wind’. In The Painter, the artist chooses his wife as a subject and makes her “vast like ruined buildings”. Music is another quality of Ashbery’s poetry. The optimistic tone of his poetry makes even trains to be melodic. Melodic Trains describes the anguish and anxiety of the journey in musical notes which end at a fanfare of celebration with music of human voices and clapping and all that.

Finally, John Ashbery is a modern poet who addresses the sensibility of the modern 201st century contemporary man. Themes like music, rebellion, art, consciousness and the habit of wrapping lines into paragraph-like stanza (which penetrate layer after layer deeper into anxieties, doubts, and false beliefs) is a recent invention. He is a craftsman like classicists and imaginative like romanticists and renowned for his simple colloquial diction. His metaphors are sometimes highly metaphysical and his poetry has a natural flow, varying in sound and effect according to the theme. All these make Ashbery a post-modern poet and establish him as a poet on sure foundations of contemporary American poetry.
Richard Wilbur; 1921-Till Date

Richard Purdy Wilbur (born March 1, 1921) is an American poet and literary translator. He was appointed the second Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress in 1987, and twice received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, in 1957 and again in 1989.

Wilbur was born in New York City and grew up in North Caldwell, New Jersey. He graduated from Montclair High School in 1938, having worked on the school newspaper as a student there. He graduated from Amherst College in 1942 and then served in the United States Army from 1943 to 1945 during World War II. After the Army and graduate school at Harvard University, Wilbur taught at Wesleyan University for two decades and at Smith College for another decade. At Wesleyan, he was instrumental in founding the award-winning poetry series of the University Press. He received two Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry and, as of 2009, teaches at Amherst College. He is also on the editorial board of the literary magazine The Common, based at Amherst College.

When only 8 years old, Wilbur published his first poem in John Martin's Magazine. His first book, The Beautiful Changes and Other Poems, appeared in 1947. Since then he has published several volumes of poetry, including New and Collected Poems (Faber, 1989). Wilbur is also a translator, specializing in the 17th century French comedies of Molière and the dramas of Jean Racine. His translation of Tartuffe has become the Standard English version of the play, and has been presented on television twice. In addition to publishing poetry and translations, he has also published several children's books including Opposites, More Opposites, and The Disappearing Alphabet.

Continuing the tradition of Robert Frost and W. H. Auden, Wilbur's poetry finds illumination in everyday experiences. Less well-known is Wilbur's foray into lyric writing. He provided lyrics to several songs in Leonard Bernstein's 1956 musical, Candide, including the famous "Glitter and Be Gay" and "Make Our Garden Grow." He has also produced several unpublished works including as "The Wing" and "To Beatrice".

His honors include the 1983 Drama Desk Special Award and the PEN Translation Prize for his translation of The Misanthrope, both the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry and the National Book Award for Things of This World (1956), the Edna St Vincent Millay award, the Bollingen Prize, and the Chevalier, Ordre des Palmes Académiques. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1959. In 1987 Wilbur became the second poet, after Robert Penn Warren, to be named U.S. Poet Laureate after the position's title was changed from Poetry Consultant. In 1988, he won the Aiken Taylor Award for Modern American Poetry and then in 1989 he won a second Pulitzer, this one

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for his New and Collected Poems. On October 14, 1994, he received the National Medal of Arts from President Bill Clinton. He also received the PEN/Ralph Manheim Medal for Translation in 1994. In 2003, Wilbur was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame. In 2006, Wilbur won the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize. In 2010 he won the National Translation Award for the translation of The Theatre of Illusion by Pierre Corneille. In 2012, Yale conferred an honorary degree, Doctor of Letters, on Wilbur.

**After the Last Bulletins**

**Introduction and Theme:** Wilbur is best known for his poetic intelligence and philosophy of life and this is well explicit in all his poems at large and in After the Last Bulletins in particular. Wilbur points to a very important fact of life of what is significant today may become insignificant tomorrow. He takes the newspapers for example and says that the newspapers which are fresh today and most welcome for and accepted for reading, become stale and useless the other day.

The poem is pictorial in nature, an example of imagery, which is a typical quality of Wilbur. He tells us what happens to the newspapers after they have been read thrown at different places. The editors publish the papers and fall into a delicious slumber, but their printed newspapers toss and tumble all over the city, get splashed by mud and torn by the spikes of railings. They are carried away by wind where it flows. They travel through streets, gutters and deserted places and faded insignificantly into nothingness. The papers, which are read enthusiastically in front of the eyes and placed securely on the shelves, are trampled down by feet after they have become outdated.

This is not the whole story. They are again printed and held important like the other day and this cycle keeps repeating all the times. The poet says that life is not motionless or stagnant. The old order is replaced by the new order. The old generation must give way for the new one. What is important today will fall into nothingness tomorrow. That is the way of the world. Things have worked the same way and will continue to be the same till the end. Things will keep like this forever. What is important in life is to keep pace with it.

**A Critique of After The Last Bulletins**

**Introduction:** Richard Wilbur is a modern poet and chooses modern themes and topics. He lives in the scientific age, but he doesn’t speak about the scientific discoveries. He discusses facts of life. After the Last Bulletins is about various facts of life. The most importance aspect is of waste. Human efforts are geared towards collecting tons of information and provide it for the common mind. The people receive information and study it casually, throw it heartlessly. They don’t enjoy reading the newspapers.

This printing of newspapers is cycled every day and it is taken to be routine matter rather than a serious one. Even this producing of newspaper is not done for a noble cause, perhaps only for the sake of routine or business itself. There seems to be a waste
everywhere: in information technology, scientific knowledge and economic productivity. After The Last Bulletins criticizes man’s preoccupation with modern media. Media has become very important in the 20th century and today its importance cannot be denied. Though the poem is about Last Bulletins and the subsequent results yet it raises certain issues about the facts of life ranging from ignorance to knowledge, the blessing of sleep, waste in human life, degrading of human society and complexity of human nature. Some of these themes are obvious and are not easy to find out, but the rest of them difficult to understand thought the poem because of its ambiguity as is the case with most American poems because they are too intellectually designed for a common mind.

Development of Thought

Abundance of knowledge and ignorance: - The poet speaks about the abundance of knowledge in the modern age. The production of newspapers and their presence everywhere actually symbolizes the abundance of knowledge scattered around and easily accessible to human mind. We do utilize this information and keep ourselves in touch with day-to-day happenings, but it is the irony of our life that despite this craze for gathering and collecting information, man’s knowledge of truth has really not improved. Man is as ignorant as he was before this abundance. Even if he has acquired this knowledge through various sources, he uses it in counter attitudes and opposites. We do collect facts, but we ignore the spiritual reality behind them. So we can say that man has advanced in the field of information technology, but he is spiritually declined. The more information he has, the more ignorant he has come to be. Despite this abundance of information which is flying all around, human nature is not understood and real peace is sought in the everyday activities.

Emergence of a New World:-

After the last bulletins the windows darken
And the whole city founders readily and deep,
Sliding on all its pillows
To the thronged Atlantis of personal sleep,

The ocean of sleep is very calm like the Atlantis. In sleep, a new world of ideas open up in which the poem addresses some issues. The concept of new world and a new power is furthered through the imagery of winds, which rise as soon as we sleep and turn off our lights. In sleep, a new word emerges. This is the world of agitations and questions, which arise from our inner self in sleep, which challenge the people who are proud of their knowledge. Perhaps it is due to these that we drown ourselves in daily activities to avoid the prick of our conscience. In the world of nature, a new power is awakened and begins to act. The furious activities of the wind defy all the false achievements, vanities and superfluities of daily life. The wind shows absolute disregard for the newspapers and magazines of which we are proud. The wind ruthlessly tears them into shreds, flinging...
them. This new world in sleep questions our knowledge and challenges our achievements and shows powerless we are in nature.

Wilbur’s naturalism is fully explicit here when mocks at the collective knowledge of human existence and renders it a waste in front of the mystical and religious consciousness, which should be the ultimate aim of our life.

Corruption of Media:

And the wind rises. The wind rises and bowls
The day’s litter of news in the alleys. Trash
Tears itself on the railings,
Soars and falls with a soft crash,

The winds rise and hurl the newspapers into the streets. Newspapers become insignificant and before the power of nature. Nature is truth and media is corruption and falsehood. When falsehood strikes against truth, it perishes. The same is the case with the newspapers, they are torn apart by the winds and battered against the surfaces and the newspapers are unable to defend themselves, because they are corrupt and strengthless. Thus the winds reject all the media. They fly like uncontrolled flight.

Vanities and Real Character: - The flying newspapers reach the park where we find plenty of human beings who have been symbolized here as the statue and the winds slap the newspapers on the face of the statue, as the poet says,

Unruly flights
Scamper the park, and taking a statue for dead
Strike at the positive eyes,
Batter and flap the stolid head
And scratch the noble name. In empty lots
Our journals spiral in a fierce noyade

Statues are motionless symbols of human vanity. The wind attacks the statue and slaps their faces. Here lies a lesson for man that decline is our ultimate fate. Greatness is too sought in character, not in status otherwise they will be attacked by nature. Characters, good behavior, attitude and action will keep us alive even after death. Weather and winds demolish constantly. They don’t accept our standard of greatness and reputation. Greatness lies in character and morality rather than in actual appearances and motionless outlook.

Immortality of Human Existence: - In empty spaces, newspapers gather our ideas, notions and general facts into the blank spaces. All the things in columns are meaningless. All the natural elements are cursing human beings. The law of nature is that we are mortals. Immortality is not for publicity. To whom are we propagating that we are immortal and after all why? We are violating the laws of nature. Night is always
heavy on mortals if there is no good in us. We fear darkness as suggested in the following line:

**After the last bulletins the windows darken**

We are mortal. That is truth and reality. We must accept reality and modern world is the world of appearances. We even try to present realities as appearances.

**Insignificance of Newspapers:** Newspapers are important in our life, but the poet challenges their importance. The poet discusses that there is no point of printing the papers because a lot of energy is consumed and wasted in their production, as their ultimate goal is destruction. The newspapers go waste. They lack the universality of literary taste. Works of literature abide even today after many centuries. Shakespeare’s Dramas, Milton’s poetry and Jane Austen or Dickens’ novels are afresh even after centuries. The only reason being they were mostly written for public awareness or societal change and development. They are universal, but the newspapers are insignificant because their basic aim is propagation, instigation, plot mongering and rigging. They are insignificant; therefore, they are tossed about in the dirty places of town.

**Conclusion:** ‘Wilbur is a rebel’. This is an apt and just assessment of Tony Heywood. Wilbur’s subjective bent is that he challenges the established norms. Here again, he satirizes the newspapers. But he also discusses that change is the spice of life otherwise, something significant today will become insignificant tomorrow. If a proper charm is not maintained in the quality of a commodity, its value diminishes. This is what we can say about After The Last Bulletins in economic terms. However, the poem is a good example of modern poetry and perfect representative of Wilbur’s subject matter and technique. His imagery is unique and striking. The mundane topic of newspapers, exploited for serious purpose is the ample proof of Wilbur’s genius in this poem.

**Marginalia**

**Introduction and Theme:** The poem is philosophising an important reality of life and puts forward his statement which is scientifically true that all forces of life are centrifugal (i.e. tending away from centralisation, as of authority). The force of life is pressurised to the borders or poetically speaking, to the margins of life. Because our energies and qualities lie in the center of life, we cannot utilize them in the best possible manner. Our dreams, visions, desires do lie in the center, but it is a reality of life that their achievements are centrifugal. The reality of life is developing or progressing from the center outwards.

We have our dreams, desires, myths and visions of a standard life, but we cannot materialize our dreams because the force of life is centrifugal and all our dreams lie in the center of our mind.
The basic idea of the poem is that things concentrate at the edges ... all other details seem to present of a cinematic presentation of the idea. The poet gives an example of pond, then of sleep and finally concludes that our sleep takes us away from the world of reality to the world of imagination which is replete with all sorts of desires, but we cannot perform during sleep to get our desires. The end of our journey is death and our energies are expanding towards this goal.

**A Critique of Marginalia**

**Introduction**

**Things concentrate at the edges; the pond-surface**
**Is bourne to fish and man**

Things concentrate at the edges is the basic message of the poem. The poet brings round this point to his readers in a graphic manner using the example of water pond and sleep both of which are examples common enough for an average mind to understand. But the philosophical point, which the poet makes, is unique and seldom touched upon by the poets. This is a typical quality of modern poets especially Americans who tend always tend to choose striking topics for their poems. Marginalia tends to present the reality that things exert their pressures to the edges and this is amply proven by the men and fish along with other botanical life in the water which are driven by the centrifugal force to the edges rather than staying in the center (centripetal). Sleep also takes us from the conscious world to the unconscious world, which is an example of centrifugal force in life.

The poem has imaginative quality along with realistic touches. There seems to be a clash between imagination and reality. It is a fact that center is important for the generation of products and results, but all its energies are pressured to the edges, so for the existence of life, life must pace along with time and naturally progress ahead for better and standard life.

The progress and advancement of life lie in the coping with the rim of whirlpool rather than enjoying its center.

**Development of Thought**

**An Attack on the traditional concept of Nucleus:** Wilbur is not simply a poet, but a philosopher who attacks the traditional concept of central significance of nucleus. Traditionally people have upheld the importance of center and nucleus. That is why Theodore Roethke hails Wilbur in the followings words, "Not a graceful mind - that's a mistake - but a mind of grace, an altogether different and higher thing."
Scientifics have discovered that the death of nucleus is the death of whole cell. They have believed in the centripetal forces rather than the centrifugal ones, but Wilbur challenges and says:

**Things concentrate at the edges;**

What he means is that complexity, richness, beauty and ugliness of the world exists not at its center but at its boundaries. It is the boundaries, which have held the center tight. Though the center is an emissary of light, knowledge and development yet our riches are centrifugal in the words of Wilbur. So the most important area for progress is not the center but the edges, which are ever expanding, evolutionary and revolutionary.

**The Limits of Man and Animal:** He uses a number of images to drive home his idea. He uses zoological and botanical imagery very common in modern American poetry introduced by the advancement of science. Wilbur says,

**The pond-surface**

*Is bourne to fish and man*

He uses the image of pond, its surface and edges. Edges serve as the ultimate boundaries separating the world of the fish from that of human beings – the world of land differed from the waterly world. It is not the centeral water of the pond which defines the limits of man and the fish. Their limits are symbolised by the borders – the edge of the pond.

Not only this zoological, but also the botanical life such as slime, moss, impure vegetation or décor, music or pattered light, in other words all the beauties and ugliness all concentrate at the edges as ascertained by Wilbur in the following lines:

**In textile scum and damask light, on which**

*The lily-pads are set; and there are also*  
*Inlaid ruddy twigs, becalmed pine-leaves,*  
*Air-baubles, and the chain mail of froth*

**Dreams vs Reality:** The poem nicely presents the theme of dream and reality, knowledge and ignorance, sleep and everyday life, fact and imagination and the opposite forces:

Descending into sleep (as when the night-lift Falls past a brilliant floor), we glimpse a sublime

**Décor and hear, perhaps, a complete music,**

*But this evades us, as in the night meadows*  
*The crickets’ million round song dies away*
The poet supports a state of mind which is conscious and unconscious at the same time, half-way between sleep and awake, imagination and reality. Again these points ascertain that the deeper we go in sleep, or higher we ascent to imagination we will find the reality at the edges not in the center. Music heard becomes appealing, the more we head towards the farthest boundaries of the song and hear that a chorus is singing for us.

**Complexity and High End of Life:** As Marginalia is a thought-provoking poem, the poet marginalizes and philosophizes life. According to the poet, life is an ocean, which ends in a whirlpool. All our qualities are centrifugal and cannot stay in the center; they must have an outlet towards the borders for sustenance.

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Our riches are centrifugal; men compose
Daily, unwittingly, their final dreams,
And those are our own voices whose remote
Consummate chorus rides on the whirlpool's rim,
Past which we flog our sails, toward which we drift,
Plying our trades, in hopes of a good drowning.
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Whatever do, whatever our professional skills, interests and hobbies are, life finally moves towards the whirlpool of death. Each human being in life has a tiny boat, which is set on sail on the ocean of life. Every one is using his particular skills plies his boat. He weaves a web of his future dreams and desires. These visions and dreams are out human experiences. The goals and targets are set for us and they call us for a deceptive center. We drown while moving towards the unknown region of death.

**Style, Imagery and Technique:** Wilbur’s style is modern and perfect. The sentences are short, the poem runs like an essay giving an introduction, presenting and developing an argument and concluding the presented material with a final message. Wilbur has touched upon a scientific topic and reinforced it with natural imagery. The scenic imagery of water pond and the things grown upon them has been fully exploited not only for the aesthetic pleasure for a romantic mind, but also supporting the main argument presented. The image of sleep is superbly presented to give the poem a dream-like quality and further enhance the point discussed earlier. Doubtlessly, Wilbur technically proves himself a perfect craftsman in this poem. Technically, the poem is a masterpiece of English literature.

**Conclusion:** Marginalia is a state of mind catalysed the social changes and hybrid cultures. Though we are awake and asleep which are the two contrary states of human mind, but the best ends can be achieves in hypnotic states. Life is going on and its force which is centrifugal will continue drawing things at its edges, but until and unless exploited properly, our riches will only remain dreams and visions and we cannot materialize them. In society, everything is in motion and the best resources lie at the edges. The glory of man is to lift himself up to the standard and achieve that Sublime and Décor that Wilbur speaks of. Though the margins are at the highest point, yet diligent and constant state of mind can achieve that unattainable target.
Still Citizen Sparrow

Introduction and Theme: - Still Citizen Sparrow is a direct shot to the modern civilized people who uphold the views that vulture is an ugly and evil animal. The poet counters the argument and believes that although vulture is believed to be a filthy and dirty animal, yet she is endowed with the rarest qualities ever gifted to any other bird.

It is vulture, which hovers the whole sky and watches natural environment and keeps it clean. Vulture was also present at the time of Prophet Noah when he preached his people and was rejected by them. Ordered by Allah, he built a boat, his people jeered at him, but he put all samples of living organism in his boat. The Great Deluge appeared and destroyed every non-believer. The same vulture was with him when Noah's boat landed at the mountain and initiated a new age of enlightenment. People never come to terms with vulture, but the poet gives a long speech containing good words on the qualities of this animal. The poet avers that some animals though look ugly outside, yet are beautiful for their traits. The real beauty is of good action, not of outer physical charm.

Because vulture builds a new world by cleaning the environment, it is associated with the prophet Noah who also built a new world. In this way, vulture becomes symbolic of the beginning of a new world of faith and gives us message that we must also be builder of a new world in which we should contribute as much as we can.

A CRITIQUE OF STILL CITIZEN SPARROW

Introduction: - The poet supports the creature, which is thought to be the ugliest creature. The poet attacks the common perception of people about this bird and presents his arguments in favour of this animal. He gives the bird masculine qualities and addresses him as ‘He’ rather than ‘It’, which shows the importance of vulture in the poet’s mind and in the human kingdom. Though vulture looks ugly, bald-headed and always living on dead rotten flesh of various stinking animals, yet it has a beauty which no animal, bird or human being can match. That virtuous or beautiful quality is cleanliness, which according to Islam is half completion of faith.

The Sparrow is still citizen only outwardly beautiful, but performing no practical function in society. On the other hand, the great responsibility of disposing of the city waste is left on the vulture. The also criticizes the modern man who whose angle of vision needs to corrected and who may welcome clean and beautiful guests at his home, but shun the trash collectors, as a result of whose efforts, the environment is made clean and beautiful.

The bravery of vulture is also evident when the whole earth was submerged in water and this vulture flew and flew over the surface of water, this venture could have killed the sparrow, but it was vulture who sacrificed for them all (other animals, bird and humans beings) and made the earth once again a living abode by cleaning the rotten stinking
flesh. This is the real inward virtue of vulgar for which he should be remembered rather than for his physical appearance.

Development of Thought

The physical description of the vulture: - If we see the vulture cruising in the sky, its movement is so attractive, its wings so wide, it looks almost regal. It doesn’t have to move its wings. None among the birds is so powerful and fine vulture. The poet says,

And at the tall
Tip of the sky lie cruising. Then you’ll see
That no more beautiful bird is in heaven’s height,
No wider more placid wings, no watch fuller flight;
He shoulders nature there, the frightfully free,

It seems so free and bearing the burden of the world upon his shoulders because its wings and shoulders are so strong. The ordinary world of birds cannot imagine the way it flies up in the air. The poet’s description of the vulture develops a soft corner among the human beings for the vulture and we begin to love this bird for his not only physical qualities, but also moral virtues.

Double Standards of People: - Still Citizen Sparrow is an animal poet is highly symbolic and satirical of modern man’s angle of perception, which he is habitual to adopt. The poet says,

Pardon him, you
Who dart in the orchard aisles, for it is he
Devours death, mocks mutability,
Has heart to make an end, keeps nature new.

The poet attacks the sparrow angrily and tells the sparrow to mind his language about the vulture and be respectful to him. The sparrow lives in orchards, wide and open furrows. How can you judge the real worth of vulture? Ordinary people and birds are afraid of the rotten dead meat of animals; vulture is courageous and takes up steps to perform the last rituals of the dead beings. But we are timid; we stay back and simply mock the people who perform such great duties. We are selfish and cowardly and they are brave and responsible. It is a tribute to vulture because he cleans what we have made dirty and evil by our own actions and actually the dirt have expelled from our existence and so we are dirty, not those who are also forward to clean. This is their highness and dignity and they deserve our respect. These people include: gutter cleaners, dusters, trash collectors and sweepers who don’t find respectable status in our society while they are more respectable than us. We only dandy our beauty and boast of our physical appearance and don’t even imagine how filthy dirty nature will become without their existence.
The poem exposes the double standards of people. We respect those who spread rubbish, but hate those who clean it. Actually, dirty are the people who spread dirt and respectable are those who clean it. The whole society is in disorder.

**Religious Symbolism:** - The poet uses religious symbolism to bring round the same theme and point. He says,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Thinking of Noah, child heart, try to forget} \\
\text{How for so many bedlam hours his saw} \\
\text{Soured the song of birds with its wheezy gnaw,} \\
\text{And the slam of his hammer all the day beset}
\end{align*}
\]

Noah was regarded mad by people, but the hero’s intelligence and understanding is far more superior to that of an ordinary man. The other birds kept on chirping, but the hero was not deflected from his mission. People called him crazy, but he didn’t stop. So man should be committed to his mission. Self-restrain is important. Noah’s journey was not pleasant when he looked down he saw destruction and death everywhere. It was only a heroic mind that could feel this pain. The poet through this religious symbol wants to bring before us an important point. The world is divided into two kinds of people: those who observe and those who perform, those who talk and those of act, those of sleep and those who wake and those of think and those who act. It is unto us what line of race we want to choose.

**Talk and Action:** - Sparrow symbolizes talk and vulture symbolizes action. Throughout the poem, the poet uses various words to keep the sparrow shut, which is at all times babbling and chirping aimlessly. The poet satirically attacks the sparrow,

\[
\begin{align*}
Pardon him, you \\
Who dart in the orchard aisles, for it is he \\
Devours death, mocks mutability \\
And he further says, \\
4--Forgive the hero, you who would have died \text{To Ararat}
\end{align*}
\]

Action speaks louder than words could be taken as the message of the poem. The sparrow's repeated chirpings produce no healthy effect on the environment; rather it may distract the attention of those who are busy with their studies or engaged in a serious task. Merely talks bring no results; action in human life is important which brings development and welfare. Our nature is constantly in change, this change causes pollution, filth and stench, which can only be resolved with proper action. Vulture shoulders responsibilities effectively and puts humanity to shame for its passivity and lethargic state.
Style, Technique and Imagery: - Wilbur’s approach in this poem is fresh and fine. He uses animal imagery like Ted Hughes, but his treatment is different. The symbol of Noah bracketed with the Vulture is superb and reinforces the concept. The poem has been divided into four line stanzas each one bringing up a new aspect of vulture, his qualities and function. The rhyme scheme is striking and classical. The four-line stanza rhymes as a b b a. The diction is forceful and proves the poet’s point of view effectively. The diction and use of such words as: lumber, cruise, rotten office, frightfully free, the slam of his hammer and rocked give a cinematic vision of the overall story of the vulture’s world.

Conclusion: - Still Citizen Sparrow is a thought-provoking poem and proves intellectual genius of Wilbur who is famous for writing, which we may call intellectual poems. The poet believes that we must give the devil his due. Though vulture is physical ugly and is found on trash eating dirty items, but there are also two sides to everything and we must take up the good side. We must look at the bright side of the picture rather than the black one.
Adrienne Rich; 1929-2012

Poet and essayist Adrienne Rich was one of America’s foremost public intellectuals. Widely read and hugely influential, Rich’s career spanned seven decades and has hewed closely to the story of post-war American poetry itself. She has progressed in life (and in her poems) from young widow and disenchanted formalist, to spiritual and rhetorical convalescent, to feminist leader and leader of a newly-defined female literature.”

Beginning with Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law: Poems 1954-1962 (1963), Rich’s work has explored issues of identity, sexuality and politics; her formally ambitious poetics have reflected her continued search for social justice, her role in the anti-war movement, and her radical feminism. Utilizing speech cadences, enjambment and irregular line and stanza lengths, Rich’s open forms have sought to include ostensibly “non-poetic language into poetry.”

Adrienne Rich was born in 1929 in Baltimore, Maryland. Her father was a renowned pathologist and professor at Johns Hopkins; her mother was a former concert pianist. Rich’s upbringing was dominated by the intellectual ambitions her father had for her, and Rich excelled at academics, gaining her degree from Radcliffe University. In 1953 she married Alfred Conrad, an economics professor at Harvard. She had three children with him, but their relationship began to fray in the 1960s as Rich became politically aware—she later stated that “the experience of motherhood was eventually to radicalize me.” Rich’s work of the 1960s and ’70s begins to show the signs of that radicalization. Moving her family to New York in 1966, Rich’s collections from this period include Necessities of Life (1966), Leaflets (1969), and The Will to Change (1971), all of which feature looser lines and radical political content. David Zuger, in Poet and Critic, described the changes in Rich’s work: "The twenty-year-old author of painstaking, decorous poems that are eager to 'maturely' accept the world they are given becomes a ... poet of prophetic intensity and 'visionary anger' bitterly unable to feel at home in a world 'that gives no room / to be what we dreamt of being.'"

Conrad died in 1970 and six years later Rich moved in with her long-term partner Michelle Cliff. That same year she published her controversial, influential collection of essays Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Institution and Experience (1976). The volume, following on the heels of her masterpiece Diving Into the Wreck, ensured Rich’s place in the feminist pantheon. Rich was criticized by some for her harsh depictions of men; however, the work she produced during this period is often seen as her finest. In Ms. Erica Jong noted that "Rich is one of the few poets who can deal with political issues in her poems without letting them degenerate into social realism." Focusing on the title poem, Jong also denies that Rich is anti-male. A portion of the poem reads: "And I am
here, the mermaid whose dark hair / streams black, the merman in his armored body. / We circle silently / about the wreck. / We dive into the hold. / I am she: I am he." Jong commented, "This stranger-poet-survivor carries 'a book of myths' in which her/his 'names do not appear.' These are the old myths ... that perpetuate the battle between the sexes. Implicit in Rich's image of the androgyne is the idea that we must write new myths, create new definitions of humanity which will not glorify this angry chasm but heal it."

Through over sixty years of public introspection and examination of society and self, Adrienne Rich has chronicled her journey in poetry and prose. "I began as an American optimist," she commented in Credo of a Passionate Skeptic, "albeit a critical one, formed by our racial legacy and by the Vietnam War...I became an American Skeptic, not as to the long search for justice and dignity, which is part of all human history, but in the light of my nation's leading role in demoralizing and destabilizing that search, here at home and around the world. Perhaps just such a passionate skepticism, neither cynical nor nihilistic, is the ground for continuing."

**Diving into the Wreck**

**Introduction and Main Theme:** - Diving into the Wreck is Adrienne Rich’s most celebrated poem. It is unanimously called epic of our modern times. The poet gives a description of the sea and her dive into the sea, the various things observed and particular experiences underwent are all beautifully narrated and described. The poem is also adventurous because it is based on the search for a wreck.

Here Diving into the Wreck is not a simple adventure story, but Rich has a very serious account to relate. On the onset, it is a story of a diver going into the water to observe a wreck, but as the seawater is deep and mysterious so are the meanings of the poem. Basically the poem is the struggle for women rights in the male-dominated society. The poem is representative of not only Rich’s ideals, but also the changing conditions of American at the time when the poem was written.

Rich becomes androgynous [1] and wants to observe the damage that was done to the female race and the treasures that prevail in their rights. Her struggle for the voice of rights is single-handed.

[1]. Androgynous: medical term relating to or exhibiting both female and male sex organs but with a predominantly female appearance.

**A Critique of Diving into the Wreck**

**Introduction:** - Wrecked ship. Ruins of a wrecked ship at the bottom of the sea are explored in "Diving into the Wreck," the title poem of the collection. Although it is not named, the Atlantic Ocean is probably the sea that houses the wreck that the speaker of
the poem explores. The wreck and the sea are not named because they must be inclusive, not exclusive. The primary symbol of the poem, representing unrecovered female history, seeks to identify with all its readers, as the final stanza reinforces:

We are, I am, you are
a book of myths in which
our names do not appear

The image of the sea is a metaphor of life as sea is full of wreckages; the world too is full of ruins. One glance around will bring back countless pictures of destruction. Diving into the Wreck provides the angle of perception about the wreck from both the male and the female side. It is androgyny that investigates the wreck, not female or male alone. The poem is hailed as an epic of the modern times. It statement is fully justified by the technical merits of the poem and the subject matter.

Development of Thought

Quest for Fact or Myth: - According to Margaret Atwood, the wreck she is diving into, in the very strong title poem, is the wreck of obsolete myths, particularly myths about men and women. She is journeying to something that is already in the past, in order to discover for herself the reality behind the myth,

the wreck and not the story of the wreck
the thing itself and not the myth.”

What she finds is part treasure and part corpse, and she also finds that she herself is part of it, a “half-destroyed instrument.” As explorer she is detached; she carries a knife to cut her way in, cut structures apart; a camera to record; and the book of myths itself, a book which has hitherto had no place for explorers like herself.

This quest—the quest for something beyond myths, for the truths about men and women, about the “I” and the “You,” the He and the She, or more generally (in the references to wars and persecutions of various kinds) about the powerless and the powerful—is presented throughout the book through a sharp, clear style and through metaphors which become their own myths. At their most successful the poems move like dreams, simultaneously revealing and alluding, disguising and concealing. The truth, it seems, is not just what you find when you open a door: it is itself a door, which the poet is always on the verge of going through.

Depth of the Poem: - According to Nancy Milford, In Diving into the Wreck she enters more deeply than ever before into female fantasy; and these are primal waters, life-giving and secretive in the special sense of not being wholly revealed. The female element and a diver may dive to plunder or to explore.

First having read the book of myths,
and loaded the camera,
and checked the edge of the knife-blade,
I put on
the body-armor of black rubber
the absurd flippers
the grave and awkward mask.
Alone and crippled by her equipment, she is descending, she is
having to do this,
and there is no one
to tell me when the ocean
will begin

And even though the mask of the diver is powerful the point of the dive is not the
exercise of power in self-defense.

the sea is not a question of power
I have to learn alone
to turn my body without force
in the deep element

She came “to explore the wreck.” And what is the wreckage; is it of marriage, or of sex,
or of the selfhood within each? Is it the female body, her own? This is the place.

And I am here, the mermaid whose dark hair
streams black, the merman in his armored body
We circle silently
about the wreck
we dive into the hold.
I am she: I am he

Moving in deeply private images, circling darkly and richly into the very sources of her
poetry, she is, as she says, “coming-home to. . .sex, sexuality, sexual wounds, sexual
identity, sexual politics”:

we are the half-destroyed instruments
that once held to a course
the water-eaten log
the fouled compass
We are, I am, you are
by cowardice or courage
the one who find our way
back to this scene
carrying a knife, a camera
a book of myths
in which
our names do not appear.

Dreaming of the person within the poem: she walking toward me, naked, swaying, bending down, her dark long hair falling forward of its own weight like heavy cloth shielding my face and her own, her full breasts brushing my cheek, moving toward my mouth. The dream is the invention of the dreamer, and the content of the dream moves in symbols of sustenance and of comfort. The hands of that diving woman become our own hands, reaching out, touching, holding; not in sex but in deliverance. That is the potency of her poetry: it infuses dreams, it makes possible connections between people in the face of what seems to be irrevocable separateness, it forges an alliance between the poet and the reader. The power of her woman’s voice crying out, I am: surviving, sustaining, continuing, and making whole

we move together like underwater plants

The meaning of Wreck: - Deborah Pope in finding the meaning of the wreck states, the wreck represents the battered hulk of the sexual definitions of the past, which Rich, as an underwater explorer, must search for evidence of what can be salvaged. Only those who have managed to survive the wreck--women isolated from any meaningful participation or voice in forces that led to the disaster--are in a position to write its epitaph and their own names in new books.

Rich’s Approach to the Wreck: - "Diving into the Wreck" presents a less privatized, more mythologized version of the theme in "Waking in the Dark." Rich again creates a setting that merges the ruinous state of modern civilization with the damaged sexuality of the self. The poet begins the exploration alone, but she suggests that others have risked such journeys toward clarification. In a passage that Rich and most readers now find problematic, the solitary explorer modulates into an androgyne as she

approaches the wreck:
the mermaid whose dark hair
streams black, the merman in his armored body
... I am she: I am he....

Speaking, feeling, and seeing for both sexes, the poet wants to witness

"the wreck and not the story of the wreck
the thing itself and not the myth."

Margaret Atwood notes that the wreck is "beyond salvation though not beyond understanding" (239), but the poem actually offers very little analysis of the wreck and quite a bit of explanation of how the wreck is approached, how the inquiry is carried out, and how the explorer understands the mission and her/himself. Other than describing the wreck of the self and of culture as the drowned face" and the half-destroyed instruments
that once held to a course
the water-eaten log / the fouled compass,

The poem focuses on the process and attitude of the explorer. Even the motive is vague and not necessarily pure:

We are, I am, you are
by cowardice or courage
the one who find our way
back to this scene
carrying a knife, a camera
a book of myths
in which
our names do not appear.

Diving into the Wreck offers a metaphor for the crisis and necessity that could only be called a detached "it" in "Trying to Talk with a Man": "Coming out here we are up against it" (my emphasis). Yet as Cary Nelson has noted, "Diving into the Wreck" is hardly a concrete or thoroughly grounded poem since the androgyny it supplies oversimplifies sexuality and is itself a myth (156).

For Nelson, the poem "demonstrates that one can suppress difficult feelings by mythologizing them" in "stylized and abstract" ways (156); however, the poem's attention to the process of exploring the wreck and not to the analysis of the wreck is significant for both Rich's feminist theory and her poetic practice. The poem has cleared ground, and unlike "When We Dead Awaken," it stops before it reconstructs anything, satisfied with creating a new signifying space rather than overly desperate to fill it. In fact, the ending returns us to the beginning of the poem and prepares for another exploration by again mentioning the knife, the camera, and the book. As Werner says, the poem continually makes ready "for the descent which we are, then and now and perpetually, just beginning" (175). In its mythologized, abstract way, "Diving into the Wreck" conveys the dialectic between the epic feminist vision and the lyric feminist vision, as the diver and the wreck of culture coincide in the image of the "drowned face."

While the modulation of the lyric "I" into the androgynous "we" presents problems, the strategy allows Rich to avoid the potential egotism of realistic self-dramatization and to expose the myth that the absence of "our names" signifies we are somehow unafflicted by the reductive sexual ideologies that prevail. Like many others in the volume, this poem raises the question of origin, of "where the split began" ("Waking in the Dark"): the poem privileges neither an external nor an internal site as the source of bifurcation, and it avoids hypostatizing a lost unity. Even the androgyny of the diver suggests not an original unity but the common bond of incompleteness, loss, and disrepair shared by all selves.

Past and Present: - The better poems of Adrienne Rich always exact a certain price from anyone willing to participate in their vision. This is also true in the case of Diving
into the Wreck. The kind of political awareness she advocates may cost a loss of personal freedom. The voyage into new territory may require us to adopt a generalized, mythic identity. The reader who accepts her vision uncritically has probably repressed the real anxieties accompanying self-recognition and personal change. The enthusiasm for her efforts to create a myth of androgynous sexuality is a typical case. To applaud the androgynous psyche or to announce this as its historical moment is easier than actually living out its consequences: “I am here, the mermaid whose dark hair / streams back, the merman in his armored body ... I am she: I am he.” We all have more varied sexual impulses than we can act on, but will Rich's romanticized androgynous figure, “whose drowned face sleeps with open eyes,” help bring them any closer to realization? While that is not a criterion one would ordinarily apply to all poetry, it is relevant in Rich’s case. Unlike Roethke, she cannot take pleasure in the powerlessness of poetic solutions to social and historical conflicts. Her poetry continually testifies to her need to work out possible modes of human existence verbally, to achieve imaginatively what cannot yet be achieved in actual relationships. Moreover, she hopes that poetry can transform human interaction. Yet perhaps that is not, after all, the point, at least in poems like “Diving into the Wreck,” despite its call for “the thing itself and not the myth.” For what we have here is the myth, as Rich herself has now implicitly acknowledged: “There are words I cannot choose again: humanism androgyny”. “Such words,” she goes on to say, “have no shame in them.” They do not embody the history of anguish, repression, and self-control that precedes them. “Their glint is too shallow”; they do not describe either the past or the life of the present. As Rich has recently written of bisexuality, “Such a notion blurs and sentimentalizes the actualities within which women have experienced sexuality; it is the old liberal leap across the tasks and struggles of here and now.” Indeed “Diving into the Wreck” demonstrates that one can suppress difficult feelings by mythologizing them. It may be that both Rich and her readers are relieved to have their fear and their desire conjoined in symbols so stylized and abstract.

**Conclusion:**

Words are purposes and maps. They are intentions we have toward each other, whether we are aware of those intentions or not; they are ways toward and away from each other. This is such a brilliant and beautiful poem, one of Rich's best. (The other great one for me is "Splitting.") There is deep sadness here, and a sense of being broken by a life that is much more powerful and vaster than our intentions had led us to believe when we thought we could set goals and reach them. So what can we do? Throw away the myths and seek what treasure remains in the devastation of our dreams. And the treasure is there, obscured, but there. The fact that the book of myths will remain, but our names will not appear in it is very hopeful. Further, I believe that the poem is one of the great poems of our time. It is a poem of disaster, with a willingness to look into it deeply and steadily, to learn whatever dreadful information it contains, to accept it, to be part of it, not as victim, but as survivor. The wreck represents the battered hulk of the sexual definitions of the past, which Rich, as an underwater explorer, must search for evidence of what can be salvaged. Only those who have managed to survive the wreck--women isolated from any meaningful participation.
or voice in forces that led to the disaster--are in a position to write its epitaph and their own names in new books.

**Aunt Jennifer's Tigers**

Introduction and theme: - Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers is a poem fully representing Adrienne Rich’s feminist ideas as well as her concept of art. This is also an autobiographical poem that reflects the deep recesses of Adrienne Rich’s mind and also the social mould in which she was thrown as a result of which she gives full vent to her feminist feelings in Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers.

First, important theme to be running in the poem is the male-dominated society which leaves women with no choice but marry and be resigned to her fate whatever it is and wants woman to be hush regarding her rights. Women are taken as nothing but commodity to be possessed by others. They are projected to be having no emotions of their own and so they must be dominated by the supreme authority of man. The poem also shows the urge of woman to break away the above shackles laid down by society for her and fulfil her desires of freedom. The tigers also represent art, which has permanent value as compared to the short-lived life of the artist who dies but whose art remains in the world. Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers is a fine example of feminist poetry, which holds a banner of protest against the patriarchal society.

**A Critique of Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers**

Introduction: - Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers is a fine example of feminist poetry with imperialistic and psychological tensions of the 20th century in which especially women find themselves as insecure and afraid of the Patriarchal social authorities. This is also a visionary poem, which dreams of a happy and fearless life free of male domination, which may give equal and parallel opportunities to the womankind so that they can progress without being hampered by the social male constraints. Aunt Jennifer appears as a symbol of the oppressed women and also the nations dominated by imperialistic powers.

Poem also shows the routine life of a woman anywhere in the world. Jennifer like any woman is sitting embroidering her screen may be for her marriage is thinking about her future and the household duties followed by it. Her end of life is also similar and reminiscent of a woman’s common lot.

The poem is packed with a number of themes, images symbols and various stylistic merits, which we may discuss as under:

**Development of Thought**

**Fight for the Rights:**-
They do not fear the men beneath the tree;
They pace in sleek chivalric certainty

Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers is also ironical because most of the women issues emerge not mainly because of male domination, but because of their own urge to get themselves free. Though male domination over women is a factor yet it is their desire to forget their feministic features and behave like men or become like men. Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers is a fight for the equal rights. Aunt Jennifer wishes for a tiger’s life free of jungle law where she may define the law and lay restrictions and scope for the womankind. She breaks away from the 20th century traditions in which woman is nothing but a sex symbol. Her prancing tigers exhibit her desire to let loose her ambitions and materialise them.

Women, be they American or Pakistani, are propagating against men and want to break away from the (secure) circles they have laid about them, but I fail to understand what equal rights these women are striving to find because they already possess the rights they must have. I personally believe that most of the tensions for women are not created by men but by themselves. It is the woman who wants to play the role of man, they have forgotten their sense of womanhood, they don’t know it means to be a woman, they think they can replace men, but they don’t try to understand that God didn’t create man and woman equal. They are physically, emotionally, domestically and socially as different as two poles of the world. God created women equal in terms of their reverence, status and importance, but the problem is that women don’t want to excel in second priority of divine creation rather they want to improve in the former aspect that is where they are mistaken and this is what destroys them in society and it is unnatural desire. It is actually that women themselves are responsible for their sense of inferiority and male domination.

Dark Aspect of Married Life:-

The massive weight of Uncle’s wedding band
Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer’ hand
When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.

Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers paints a decidedly dark portrait of a married woman’s life in the domestic sphere. Patriarchal society, oppression and female helplessness are all delicately chided in this powerful poem. By examining the way Rich uses metaphor to further her purpose, we will unearth the deeper and multi-layered implications of this well-known piece.

In the first stanza, we are introduced to the sympathetic protagonist of the poem, Aunt Jennifer. Instead of describing her, however, Rich chooses to establish Aunt Jennifer’s ownership of Tigers and continues to describe them. The tigers are vivacious and vividly portrayed. The tigers are colorfully described as "bright" and seeming full of energy; they happily "prance across the screen."
Aunt Jennifer is described as conducting needle work with a piece of wool. “We then realize that this menial, domestic task is made difficult by the “massive weight” of the wedding ring that Aunt Jennifer is wearing.” This is a particularly daunting notion as usually we thing of death as although tragic in many senses, ultimately a liberator. “Completely free and fearless of the men below them, the tigers “pace in sleek chivalric certainty. Where the first stanza serves as a medium to explain what the tigers represent, the second stanza tells us who Aunt Jennifer is, and what she represents. So in order to create something to stand up against the patriarchal society in which she lived, Aunt Jennifer decided on masculine creatures. Aunt Jennifer and her tigers are in fact polar opposites, her tigers are everything that she isn’t and wishes to be. ”

In a possibly subconscious attempt to live vicariously through free and happy beings, Rich’s protagonist, Aunt Jennifer, has created tigers. However, under the oppressive world that she lives in, even this relatively symbol embroidery seems somewhat of a daunting task, for “even the ivory needle is hard to pull. However, Aunt Jennifer’s oppression is so extreme that not even death will grant her freedom.” As the poem unravels, we realize these tigers serve as a sharp contrast to the psyche of Aunt Jennifer. In a very bittersweet closing couplet, the tigers are described as eternal beings, having the freedom to forever “go on prancing, proud, and unafraid. In short, she says that even in death, she will be oppressed by patriarchal society, or “ringed with the ordeals she was mastered by. Here, we begin to really appreciate the juxtaposition between Aunt Jennifer and her tigers. Sedentary and listless, Aunt Jennifer represents an oppressed housewife lacking the ability to stand up for herself.

**Aunt Jennifer – a symbolic character:**

Who is Aunt Jennifer? Does she even exist? I had to ask myself these questions before even going further into the poem. The answers opened the door to a deeper meaning behind Aunt Jennifer's Tigers. Based on Adrienne Rich's background I believe Aunt Jennifer did exist. However, Aunt Jennifer was not Rich's aunt. Aunt Jennifer represented women all over the world, particularly women in American, who were caught under the oppressive hand of a patriarchal society. Adrienne Rich was perhaps one of those women. Rich, one of the most influential poets of her time, dealt with controversial issues such as sexuality, race, language, power, and women's culture. Her passion in this area forced her to look and challenge the standard and the norm. The popular cliché that refers to marriage as that old "ball and chain" takes on a more serious meaning with Rich as she reveals, through the simple lines of Aunt Jennifer's Tigers, a woman's struggles with expression, rebellion, and a society where power is defined as masculine. This poem tells of "Aunt Jennifer", who is the symbol of feminism in this particular poem. This poem offers an image of power revealed and restrained by domestic arts. This is shown in the case that she is restrained by her husband's wedding band, thus revealing that she Aunt Jennifer was expected to be a devoted and domesticated wife. Aunt Jennifer living her part in a man's world is forcing her into a role that she does not fit naturally. Aunt Jennifer symbolises oppressed women, imperialistically dominated nations and weakness.
**Feminist conflict:** - According to Deborah Pope, the poem shows a conflict in the feminist mind. The fearful, gloomy woman waiting inside her darkening room for the emotional and meteorological devastation to hit could be Aunt Jennifer, who is similarly passive and terrified, overwhelmed by events that eclipsed her small strength. “Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers” is, however, an even clearer statement of conflict in women, specifically between the impulse to freedom and imagination (her tapestry of prancing tigers) and the “massive weight” of gender roles and expectations, signified by “Uncle’s wedding band.” Although separated through the use of the third person and a different generation, neither Aunt Jennifer in her ignorance nor Rich as a poet recognizes the fundamental implications of the division between imagination and duty, power and passivity.

**Oppression, Rebellion and Immortality:**

> When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie  
> Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.  
> The tigers in the panel that she made  
> Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid.

According to Thomas B. Byars, Rich's own remarks on this poem, in "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision", are an important starting place; she discusses how even in a formal and consciously distanced poem of her early period, she can discover clear (if latent) feminist concerns.

Perhaps most interesting, however, is the fact that the needlework tigers, like Rich's poem itself, are ineffectual as rebellion, because the very means of their rebellion are inscribed in the oppressor's language, and thus reveal an unhealed split in the psyche of the oppressed.

The tigers display in art the values that Aunt Jennifer must repress or displace in life: strength, assertion, fearlessness, fluidity of motion. And the poem's conclusion celebrates the animal images as a kind of triumph, transcending the limited conditions of their maker's life. Accepting the doctrine of "ars longa, vita brevis," Rich finds in her character's art both persistence and compensation; she sees the creations as immortalizing the hand that made them, despite the contrary force of the oppressive structure of Aunt Jennifer's conventional marriage, as signified by the ring that binds her to her husband. This doctrine is utterly consonant with what was, according to Rich, "a recurrent theme in much poetry I read [in those days]. . . the indestructibility of poetry, the poem as vehicle for personal immortality" (Blood 168). And this more or less explicit connection helps show how deeply implicated Rich herself was in Aunt Jennifer's situation and her achievement, despite the "asbestos gloves" of a distancing formalism that "allowed me to handle materials I couldn't pick up barehanded" (Lies 40-41).

The problem, however, is that the tigers are clearly masculine figures--and not only masculine, but heroic figures of one of the most role-bound of all the substructures of
patriarchy: chivalry. Their "chivalric certainty" is a representation by Aunt Jennifer of her own envisioned power, but it is essentially a suturing image, at once stitching up and reasserting the rift between her actual social status an her vision. Aunt's name, after all, echoes with the sound of Queen Guinevere's; her place in chivalry is clear. Her tigers are only Lancelots, attractive because illicit, but finally seducing her to another submission to the male. So long as power can be envisioned only in terms that are culturally determined as masculine, the revolutionary content of the vision, which was all confined to a highly mediated and symbolic plane in any case, will remain insufficient. Indeed, the fact that assertion against the patriarchy is here imagined only in terms set by the patriarchs may be seen as this poem's version of the tigers' "fearful symmetry." And the "Immortal hand or eye" that framed their symmetry is not Aunt Jennifer's framing her needlework, but patriarchy's, framing Aunt Jennifer.

Symbolism in Aunt Jennifer's Tigers: - The poem is packed with symbolism from the first to the last. Introduction of the tigers, how they are prancing across a screen symbolizes Aunt Jennifer, roaming in a world freely; although it is telling of a screen she crafted. The tigers are bright topaz denizens because they are different in the world, and are not just plain, (green), like everyone else. This symbolizes Aunt Jennifer's individual thinking, and how she is different. The tigers don't fear the men beneath the tree because Aunt Jennifer did not fear men at first and was living as an independent individual with her own mind.

The tigers are slowly walking elegantly, showing that they are confident and 'chivalric' (gentlemanly)---this may show that Aunt Jennifer knows she is fine without having to be married. This line is telling of Aunt Jen's fingers 'fluttering' through her wool--this is just an allusion using an activity she likes to do, to tell of how she was roaming freely and happily before marriage. The ivory needle is a symbol for how hard it is to keep yourself independent and essentially a free-thinker when you are married. Uncle's wedding band on her finger is massive because he is strict towards how she should be a domesticated wife and not a free soul. It "sits heavily upon her hand" because her marriage has taken a toll on her, and she can feel it heavily on her heart and soul. When Aunt Jen dies, she will die as a lonely and depressed woman, and her hands are terrified because they never got to be free again.

Jen's hands stand as a symbol of her body, in that she was tired and sick from the ordeals (being a housewife) that she was mastered by [her husband--making her act this way] The tigers are a symbol of what will be left of Aunt Jen's existence after her death, in that she never got to "prance" as proud and unafraid when she was married and was constrained by what women were expected.

Style and Imagery: - Visual imagery predominates in the first stanza. We learn that the speaker is a niece or nephew from the title and the first line, but we actually learn very little about Aunt Jennifer herself. Instead we see the tapestry that she is weaving and the tigers that "prance" across it. The two action verbs "pace" and "prance" emphasize the strength of these animals, while the vividness of their "topaz" color draws
attention to their striking presence. The aabb rhyme scheme mimics the rhythm of their movement. The word “denizens” has a negative connotation that links with the dark picture of “Uncle” in the second stanza.

In the second picture we shift to a visual picture of Aunt Jennifer. The alliteration “fingers fluttering” suggests her physical weakness; she is so feeble that she has trouble manipulating the needle “through her wool.” In the last part of the stanza we find out that her troubled marriage has had something to do with her condition. The words “massive weight suggest oppression, as do the words “Sits heavily.” The end rhymes “band” and “hand” also indicate that being married has kept this woman down. The point of view here would seem to be that of a woman, indicating that the speaker is the niece rather than Aunt Jennifer’s nephew.

In the third stanza, the speaker projects into the future, and suggests that once she is dead, Aunt Jennifer will continue to be encumbered by her earthly marriage. Her hands will still be “terrified,” suggesting that “Uncle has been so abusive that his reach will exceed human limitations. The word “ringed” has a double connotation—indicating not only the ring that “sits heavily” on her hand, but the difficulties in her life that will continue to surround her. The “tigers in the panel” will also go on forever, but by contrast they will continue into infinity as fierce, arrogant beings. The alliteration in the last line of “prancing” and “proud” heightens our sense of the irony in this poem, because they are so much stronger than the woman who created them.

**Technique:** - It is difficult to depict a primary poetic technique within this poem. The reason being that, many devices are used to bring forth the message that Rich has embedded within it. However, symbolism is the most prominent. The poem is set in a traditional format, using simple rhyme and meter to give the reader a sense of formality. Adrienne Rich’s “Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers”, depicts an audacious woman trapped within a timid and suppressed life. Marriage and the culture that supports it have effected the character in this poem greatly. Reality seems inescapable because of the ring that "sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand". The tapestry that Aunt Jennifer is creating in the poem, is very symbolic of her potential. When you picture a tiger, the words power, fluidity, nobility, and strength may accompany that image. Those same words accompany the hidden life of Aunt Jennifer.

The first stanza opens the poem with a truly bold image of tigers as "They pace in sleek chivalric certainty". The tigers obviously have a very significant symbolic purpose in this poem. They portray the fearlessness, assertion and power, that Aunt Jennifer displaces in order to lead her conventional life.

**Conclusion:**- Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers is a fabulous poem may also be serving a wife of a colonial officer (Uncle) and being repressed because of his hard attitude. Though Jennifer is unable to change the patriarchal system, she, to some extent, contributes to the rebellion against this system which leaves women but no options to perform in society. The poem is remarkable for its style technique, imagery, symbolism and theme – a
typical quality of Adrienne Rich as a modern poet. Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers being a rebellious in nature is an autobiographical poem at the same time because the repressed and dominated personality of Jennifer parallels Adrienne Rich’s. In short, the poem is to be understood at so many different levels that its single interpretation is not possible.

**Final Notation**

**Introduction and Theme:** Final Notations is thematically an ambiguous poem. The poem is not understood because of the flowing imagery or stylistically presented issues, but because of the reader’s individual perception of the poem. We can say that unlike Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers, which has a few fixed themes and issues, Final Notations is infinite in its interpretations.

Final Notation is a cultural, political and personally emotional poem which has been written in a simple and neat style with careful economy of words. The poet is experiencing new lifestyles, sexual issues, motherhood tensions, friendship or even doctor patient relationship. Final notations shows the last message of the poet or the New World Order of a colonial power when it has controlled a territory or is coming to control it.

In short, we can say that Final Notation shows us things which are difficult at first become easy, things which are strange at one time, become familiar at another, things which may seem painful, but become joyful and pleasant which encountered and things which people apparently looking disgusting in the first impressions, later become our heart and soul with the passage of time.

**A Critique of Final Notations**

**Introduction:** This is a fine, simple and little piece of poetry. The speaker is taken to be a lover and the addressee is the beloved. The lover is telling the beloved how to make love. The relationship between man and woman is very complex and this is the point to which the poem alludes.

The poem also shows a pregnant woman who is going to be operated on by her doctor and the doctor is giving instructions to the patients on how to react in this operation or is trying to reassuring the patient so that the seemingly difficult operation for the patient should be completed without any complication.

The poem has layers of meanings and open to various interpretations and the reader should be feel at large to interpret the poem at whatever level he wants. However, the approach suggested for the reader is three-fold. The first is male-female relationship, doctor-patient relationship and the policy of the colonial powers with the poor nations. Though some people might not agree, the poem does have imperialistic allusions in it structure and the American dominating attitude towards the world at large.
The poem is structurally simple, but thematically complex. The language is neat and no difficult word used, but the use of structure is ambiguous.

Development of Thought

Doctor-Patient relationship: - The only complete analogy and supposition found in the poem is that a pregnant woman is lying before the doctor, may be to be delivered or her first visit to the doctor regarding her pregnancy. When the doctor is giving her instructions about the new experience. Though it looks difficult, yet

**It will touch through your ribs, it will take all your heart**
**It will not be long, it will occupy your thought**

The procedure is not long. Normally, it takes a few minutes unless complications arise. The child seemingly so disturbing and troubling in the belly of the mother after a short time and struggle on part of the woman will be delivered. As she says,

**It will be short, it will take all your breath**

The procedure may be difficult for some women who are taking this first experience, but it is very simple if it taken to be so. The few months of pregnancy are touching and delicate, special care needs to be taken, the overall trouble becomes a reward for the mother. As the doctor is says,

**It will be simple; it will become your will.**

The disturbing child in the belly ironically becomes the passion, will and the centre of full attention for the mother. The wants to get rid of the child during the delivery, but after the child is born, it becomes the most important thing of the world for her.

Lover and beloved relationship:-

**It will not be simple, it will not be long**
**It will take little time, it will take all your thought**
**It will take all your heart, it will take all your breath.**
**It will be short, it will not be simple.**

A young girl, running towards teens, feels a number of strange romantic and ideal desires, looks for partners and once finding a partner becomes terrified at the idea of physical relationship. As the woman, however bold or open-hearted, is naturally shy and repressed, is unable to understand the nature of the first physical union. Ultimately the responsibility is left to the lover who in a small and brief style tries to explain the importance and process of this newfound physical relationship. The nature of this relationship is not simple, but once experienced, it will bring abundance of joys in the life the partner. This physical relationship may be the first one in the life of unmarried
woman or may be the first on the first marriage night in which the lover is trying to make physical contacts. Thus things seemingly looking dangerous or troubling are sometimes sweet in actual experience.

**Sexual Harassment in the Final Notations:**

- It will touch through your ribs, it will take all your heart
- It will not be long, it will occupy your thought
- It a city occupied, as a bed is occupied
- It will take all your flesh, it will not be simple

The modern world is the age of harassment especially for women. The young girls let loose for various experiences in the name of freedom and modernity or broadmindedness fall a prey to such harassment where studs try to encourage these young modern girls into such physical activities. These studs gradually make women slave to their own appetites; they occupy their bed like a ruler occupies a city. They leave them no options but be ruled and controlled by their passions. The studs use various tactics to convince their new prey of the physical contact. The newborn and uncontrolled desires in women ultimately lead them astray without proper management or responsibility of their parents.

**Theme of Eagerness and Oneness in Love**

- It will be short, it will take all your breath
- It will be simple, it will become your will

Final Notations can also be taken to be a pure love poem in which the poet wants to achieve pure love regardless of the metaphysical speculations of Donne or casualness of Surrey-Wyatt in a concise and simple language. The most important point in lovemaking is eagerness and wilfulness. It is not difficult to achieve this state if sure determination and seriousness is show. This seriousness leads to oneness of the lovers when love becomes a passion or will of the two.

**Unfaithfulness of the lover**

- You are coming into us who cannot withstand you
- You are coming into us who never wanted to withstand you
- You are taking parts of us into places never planned
- You are going far away with pieces of our lives

The lover has left her beloved and went on to establish relations with some other woman and as a result he leaves a note behind giving her instructions that she should forget him. The above lines are an ample proof of this interpretation. The beloved outbursts into the above lines. The repetition of ‘coming into’ reinforces the idea of establishing relation with the beloved first and the phrase ‘pieces of life’ symbolises faithlessness and
quit love on part of the lover. The love once developed in the beloved by the lover is disintegrating and those pieces are being shared by the lover with somebody else.

**Style, Imagery, Symbolism and Technique: -** The style of the poem is simple. There is no stylistic ambiguity. The only ambiguity lies in the nature of theme or the message of the speaker and also the identity of the speaker and the addressee needs to be resolved by different speculations from the reader. The themes of the poem range from personal to social, medical, psychological, political and emotional.

The repetition of different lines and words show intensity and importance of the theme (though theme is not directly addressed by the poet, it is to be explicated by the reader on the strength of his speculation. The lines are erratic which symbolise the complexity of the theme, again whatever it may be.

The title has been made ambitious. Does it related to music, dictation or what? In short, the poem is not rich in great images or symbols. The only thing important about the poem is complexity and that is what it is rich in.

**Conclusion: -** Cutting the long story short, we can say that the poem depends on the experience of the reader for various interpretations. The complexity of the poem is also caused by the extreme subjectivity in the poem. The poem is too personal to understand in its true perspective. This complexity is the typical characteristic of modern American poetry which is based on confessional and experimental nature of their artists.

**Gabriel**

**Introduction and Theme: -** The poem tells us about the meeting of two strangers who share many things with each other. There are certain reasons or perhaps things remain unsaid on part of the lovers for which they are separated. The nature of the person is gentle and dangerous at the same time.

The poem also shows the hollowness of modern age, which has become materialistic and has quite the religious ways and manners in the 20th century. All the things have come to be questioned including religion in the 20th century. The angel is bright and dark at the same time. The people are kind and poisonous. These contradictions are the results of the 20th century.

The poem shows a turn of events in the life of people. Those happy at one times become different or sad at the other. Things favourable today become unfavourable tomorrow and people take to new possessions. Adrienne Rich is a product of the 20-century that is fraught with tensions and confusions. Man in this century is suffering and undergoing various battles. He is enslaved by the materialistic system of the contemporary powers and he is in chains as W.B. Yeats says,

**Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold**
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the earth

And the remedy is the Second Coming of Christ to rid man of the contemporary chains of materialism, faithlessness and bondage. Gabriel is the messenger thought whom Christ sends a message to the poet.

A Critique of Gabriel

Introduction:- The poem in its simplicity tells us that the world is devastated and the people have become corrupt so the inspiration of Christ is important for the salvation of humanity. A new faith is necessitated for the survival of the world.

Adrienne Rich, being a poet, spends most of her time reading poetry and when she reads poetry this time, new ideas emerge in her mind those, which never emerged before. The angle appears which shows sympathy towards her. She experiences various troubles of the 20th century and finally finds their solutions in the divine inspiration through the message of Gabriel sent by Christ according to their faith as salvation for humanity in the confused times.

Though the poem has religious significance, the poem is also taken to be purely on love foundations. Gabriel is the poet’s previous lover which for reasons left her, but has come back to join her.

Development of Thought

Gabriel as a symbol of Revelation and Salvation: - Gabriel is traditional known as the Angel of Revelation who brought revelation to all the prophets in the world. In this poem, Gabriel does stand for revelation, but he also symbolises Christ who sends Gabriel to the poet for salvation, the poet who in turn stands for humanity. Humanity in the form of poet has taken many turns. The Two Great World Wars have shattered the values cherished by the 19th century and even the previous centuries. These wars devastated the structure of the world. There is anarchy ruling the world. It seems that no goodness is left in the world as the poet cries in the beginning,

There are no angels yet
Here comes an angel one
With a man’s face

The exploitive nature in the world surprises the poet that no angels are left in the 20th century of science and materialism and she is amazed to an angel in her room. The angel bears a young man’s face. It is Gabriel who awaited by the poet for revelation. The poet has faith in the power of Christ that he could never have left the world in its inertia because he is a benevolent prophet. So he sends Gabriel as a symbol of himself so that he may give the poet a message to renew the world once again in its former shape. But
the poet is not used to angels in this materialistic age, so she is terrified when she sees the angel,

   But he doesn’t say that His message  
   Drenches his body  
   He’d want to kill me  
   For using words to name him

This shows that the poetess has no touch of spirituality. She is occupied with all the knowledge of the world, but she is spiritually hollow. Even the poet’s attitude towards Gabriel is casual as she says,

   I get your message Gabriel  
   Just will you stay looking  
   Straight at me

This is not usually the behaviour of man before an angel if one becomes visible. The angel, Gabriel being a symbol of truth and revelation, comes with a definite message to convey to humanity but humanity is not even ready to listen or act upon what he might say. Poet symbolising humanity is even doubtful of the identity of the angel.

Lost and Found Love: - The poem has another strand apart from its religious connotations. The second strand of the poem is lost and found love. Gabriel also symbolises lost love, which is ultimately found. The meeting between the poet and her previous lover starts in the following manner,

   Here comes an angel one  
   With a man’s face young  
   Shut-off the dark  
   Side of the moon turning to me  
   And saying: I am the plumed  
   Serpent the beast  
   With fangs of fire and a gentle  
   Heart

She recognises that he is her past lover who left her and now he has come in the shape of an angel, though the inner reality of the lover is perceived by the poet and she does understand how poisonous he was and could be. The Gabriel symbolising a handsome man who comes to meet his beloved (with inner bad intentions or a bad past) whom he left. The poet is so terrified may be at her past experience with the lover when she says that

   He’d want to kill me

   For using words to name him
The poet wants to remain busy in her studies and contemplation of the world affairs and political and social tensions rather than get involved into his love affair again because he previously deceived her. As she says,

\begin{verbatim}
   I sit in the bare apartment
   Reading
   Words stream past me poetry
   Twentieth-century rivers
\end{verbatim}

Apart from his newborn love for the poet, the so-called angel is not behaving in a manner that a lover should. Importance of communication cannot be denied in love but this lover is silent.

\begin{verbatim}
   The angel is barely
   Speaking to me
\end{verbatim}

Certainly, because of the 20th confused times and lack of assurance on part of the lover, the poet cannot be blamed and especially she has been previously deceived by him or some one like him. As she has lost faith in love, she finds all men equal. She says,

\begin{verbatim}
   He stood or someone like him
   Salutations in gold-leaf
   Ribboning from his lips
   Today again the hair streams
   To his shoulders
\end{verbatim}

His physical appearance is as charming as it was before. The word Gabriel appears satirical and ironical because he has come with a motive perhaps (of sexual nature) rather than true love. The poet also feels mixed feelings of joy and terror. Rather than speaking or communicating love,

\begin{verbatim}
   We glance miserably
   Across the room at each other

   It’s true there are moments
   Closer and closer together
   When words stick in my throat
   ‘the art of love’
   ‘the art of words’

   I get your message Gabriel
   Just will you stay looking
   Straight at me
   Awhile longer
\end{verbatim}
At such times, the art of love is important because mere facial expressions perhaps don’t work. But in the present situation, the Gabriel’s attitude seems based on a sexual motive rather than real love. He has come back with the motive of establishing physical relationship, but the poet understands his games and satirically says,

I get your message Gabriel
Just will you stay looking
Straight at me
Awhile longer

The poet understands the motives of men and she rejects seemingly beautiful and inwardly serpent like Gabriel. He is a fake lover and not a true Gabriel who believes in revelations and truth.

**Conclusion:** Gabriel is a thought-provoking poem which highlights current tensions in the 20th century and the importance of truth and revelation for the salvation of this downtrodden humanity. Gabriel becomes before us a symbol of divinity as well as a secular symbol of a young man with a fantastic expression on the face wrapped with inward lust.

Technically, Gabriel is a superior poem which has used the image of Gabriel beautifully and its relevant to the changing conditions of the world. The poem is based on a socio-political background. Though the atmosphere is that of a love poetry, the poem is remarkable for its ironical images. Taken in view the feminism of those days the poem seems fit to be studied in the light of Rich’s passion for the liberation of women.