

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray

The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.
Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight, 5
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;
Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain 10
Of such, as wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.
Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering
heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid, 15
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.
The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built
shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed. 20
For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share. 25
Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy
stroke!
Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure; 30
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.
The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour. 35
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.
Nor you, ye Proud, impute to These the fault,
If Memory o'er their Tomb no Trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted
vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise. 40
Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honor's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flattery sooth the dull cold ear of Death?
Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid 45
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.
But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll; 50
Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,

And froze the genial current of the soul.
Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, 55
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.
Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little Tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's 60
blood.
The applause of listening senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,
Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone 65
Their growing virtues, but their crimes
confin'd;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,
The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame, 70
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.
Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life 75
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.
Yet even these bones from insult to protect,
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture
decked,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh. 80
Their name, their years, spelt by the unlettered
muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die. 85
For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?
On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires; 90
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev'n in our Ashes live their wonted Fires.
For thee, who mindful of the unhonoured Dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate,
If chance, by lonely contemplation led, 95
Some kindred Spirit shall inquire thy fate,
Haply some hoary-headed Swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn. 100
"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,

His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.
“Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn, 105
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless
love.
“One morn I missed him on the customed hill,
Along the heath and near his favorite tree; 110
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;
“The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him
borne.

Approach and read (for thou can’st read) the lay, 115
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.”

Author Biography:

Born in the Cornhill district of London in 1716, Gray was the son of Dorothy Antrobus Gray, a milliner, and Philip Gray, a scrivener. Gray’s father was a mentally disturbed and violent man who at times abused his wife. Gray attended Eton School from 1725 until 1734, when he entered Cambridge University. He left Cambridge in 1738 without taking a degree, intending to study law in London. However, he and childhood friend Horace Walpole embarked on an extended tour of Europe. The two separated in Italy in 1741 after a quarrel, and Gray continued the journey on his own. He returned to London later in the year, shortly before his father died. Gray then moved with his mother to Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, and began his most productive period of poetic composition. In 1742 Gray wrote his first major poem, “Ode on the Spring,” which he sent to his close friend Richard West—unknowingly on the very day of West’s death from tuberculosis. In the next three months Gray wrote “Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College,” “Hymn to Adversity,” and “Sonnet on the Death of Mr. Richard West.” It is believed that he also worked on “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” during this time, though this poem was not published until 1751. Gray returned to Cambridge at the end of 1742 and received a Bachelor of Civil Law degree the next year. Gray lived at the university for most of the rest of his life, but he never took part in tutoring, lecturing, or other academic duties; instead he pursued his studies and writing, taking advantage of the intellectual stimulation of the setting. In 1757 Gray was offered the position of Poet Laureate, but he declined it. He moved to London in 1759 to study at the British Museum and remained there for two years. He read widely and earned a reputation as one of the most learned men in Europe. Except for regular trips back to London and elsewhere in England, Gray stayed in Cambridge from 1761 until the end of his life. In 1768 Gray was named Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, an office he held until his death in 1771.

Summary:

Lines 1-4: In the first stanza, the speaker observes the signs of a country day drawing to a close: a curfew bell ringing, a herd of cattle moving across the pasture, and a farm laborer returning home. The speaker is then left alone to contemplate the isolated rural scene. The first line of the poem sets a distinctly somber tone: the curfew bell does not simply ring; it “knells”—a term usually applied to bells rung at a death or funeral. From the start, then, Gray reminds us of human mortality. **Lines 5-8:** The second stanza sustains the somber tone of the first: the speaker is not mournful, but pensive, as he describes the peaceful landscape that surrounds him. Even the air is characterized as having a “solemn stillness.” **Lines 9-12:** The sound of an owl hooting intrudes upon the evening quiet. We are told that the owl “complains”; in this context, the word does not mean “to whine” or “grumble,” but “to express sorrow.” The owl’s call, then, is suggestive of grief. Note that at no point in these three opening stanzas does Gray directly refer to death or a funeral; rather, he indirectly creates a funereal atmosphere by describing just a few mournful sounds. **Lines 13-16:** It is in the fourth stanza that the speaker directly draws our attention to the graves in the country churchyard. We are presented with two potentially conflicting images of death. Line 14 describes the heaps of earth surrounding the graves; in order to dig a grave, the earth must necessarily be disrupted. Note that the syntax of this line is slightly confusing. We would expect this sentence to read “Where the turf heaves”—not “where heaves the turf”: Gray has inverted the word order. Just as the earth has been disrupted, the syntax imitates the way in which the earth has been disrupted. But by the same token, the

The Epitaph

Here rests his head upon the lap of earth
A youth to fortune and to fame unknown.
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy marked him for her own. 120
Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
He gained from Heaven (’twas all he wished) a
friend.
No farther seek his merits to disclose, 125
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

“rude Forefathers” buried beneath the earth seem entirely at peace: we are told that they are laid in “cells,” a term which reminds us of the quiet of a monastery, and that they “sleep.” **Lines 17-20:** If the “Forefathers” are sleeping, however, the speaker reminds us that they will never again rise from their “beds” to hear the pleasurable sounds of country life that the living do. The term “lowly beds” describes not only the unpretentious graves in which the forefathers are buried, but the humble conditions that they endured when they were alive. **Lines 21-24:** The speaker then moves on to consider some of the other pleasures the dead will no longer enjoy: the happiness of home, wife, and children. **Lines 25-28:** The dead will also no longer be able to enjoy the pleasures of work, of plowing the fields each day. This stanza points to the way in which the “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” contains elements of both Augustan and Romantic poetry. Poetry that describes agriculture—as this one does—is called georgic. Georgic verse was extremely popular in the eighteenth century. Note, however, that Gray closely identifies the farmers with the land that they work. This association of man and nature is suggestive of a romantic attitude. The georgic elements of the stanza almost demand that we characterize it as typical of the eighteenth century, but its tone looks forward to the Romantic period. **Lines 29-32:** The next four stanzas caution those who are wealthy and powerful not to look down on the poor. These lines warn the reader not to slight the “obscure” “destiny” of the poor—the fact that they will never be famous or have long histories, or “annals,” written about them. **Lines 33-36:** This stanza invokes the idea of *memento mori* (literally, a reminder of mortality). The speaker reminds the reader that regardless of social position, beauty, or wealth, all must eventually die. **Lines 37-40:** The speaker also challenges the reader not to look down on the poor for having modest, simple graves. He suggests, moreover, that the elaborate memorials that adorn the graves of the “Proud” are somehow excessive. In this context, the word “fretted” in line 39 has a double meaning: on the one hand, it can refer to the design on a cathedral ceiling; on the other hand, it can suggest that there is something “fretful,” or troublesome, about the extravagant memorials of the wealthy. **Lines 41-44:** The speaker observes that nothing can bring the dead back to life, and that all the advantages that the wealthy had in life are useless in the face of death. Neither elaborate funeral monuments nor impressive honors can restore life. Nor can flattery in some way be used to change the mind of death. Note here Gray’s use of personification in characterizing both “flattery” and “death”—as though death has a will or mind of its own. **Lines 45-48:** The speaker then reconsiders the poor people buried in the churchyard. He wonders what great deeds they might have accomplished had they been given the opportunity: one of these poor farmers, the speaker reasons, might have been a great emperor; another might have “waked ... the living lyre,” or been a great poet or musician. **Lines 49-52:** The poor were never able to fulfill their political and artistic potential, however, because they were uneducated—they never received the “Knowledge” that would enable them to rule and to create. Instead, “Penury,” or poverty, “froze the genial current of their soul.” That is, poverty paralyzed their ability to draw upon their innermost passions—the very passions that could have inspired them to become great poets or politicians. **Lines 53-56:** In a series of analogies, Gray observes that the talents of the poor are like a “gem” hidden in the ocean or a “flower” blooming in the desert. Just as an unseen flower in the desert is a “waste,” Gray suggests, the uneducated talents of the poor are also a “waste,” because they remain unused and undeveloped. **Lines 57-60:** The speaker then compares these poor, uneducated people to three of the most famous and powerful people of the previous century: John Hampden, a parliamentary leader who defended the people against the abuses of Charles I; John Milton, the great poet who wrote *Paradise Lost* and who also opposed Charles I; and Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England from 1653 to 1658. The speaker suggests that buried in this churchyard might be someone who—like Hampden, Milton, or Cromwell—had the innate ability to oppose tyranny, but never had the opportunity to exercise that ability. **Lines 61-64:** This person, the speaker reasons, with the proper education and resources, might have “commanded” the government as well as any great political leader. Note, however, that Gray gives us two ways in which to consider this power. On the one hand, a great ruler can receive applause and can ignore “threats of pain and ruin.” A great leader can “scatter plenty,” can offer prosperity, to a grateful nation. But on the other hand, if one governs, one is, in fact, exposed to dangerous threats. And simply governing to receive “applause” suggests a shallow and self-serving motive. Moreover, “scattering plenty” implies that the wealth of a nation can be squandered by its rulers. Gray may be suggesting that having power is not as desirable as it seems. Note that the final line of this stanza is enjambed; it continues into the following line—and in this case, the next stanza. **Lines 65-68:** The first line of this stanza continues the thought of the previous, enjambed line. It abruptly reminds us that the impoverished conditions of the poor “forbade” them from becoming great rulers. Gray underscores the abrupt shock of this idea by abruptly interrupting the flow of the line with a caesura. Building on the idea of the previous stanza, the speaker notes that

if poverty prevented the country laborers from acquiring the “virtues” of great and powerful people, it also prevented them from committing the “crimes” often associated with those people—and especially with those people who hold political power. In particular, it prevented them from engaging in the bloody activity associated with the British Civil War. **Lines 69-72:** Because these farm laborers were not in positions of power, the speaker reasons, they never had to ignore their own consciences. Nor did they sacrifice their artistic talents (the gift of the “Muse”) to “Luxury” or “Pride.” **Lines 73-76:** The speaker continues his praise of the simple life of common people. They are “far from the madding crowd” of city and political life. “Madding” here can mean either “maddening” (that is, the source of madness or insanity) or it can mean “mad” (that is, the crowd is itself hatefully insane). In either case, the common country people were removed from this insane world; as a result, they never “strayed” into the immoral acts of the powerful. Instead, they kept steadily to their simple but meaningful lives. **Lines 77-80:** The speaker then reminds us that these common people are, in fact, long dead. He notes that even if they were not powerful or great, and even if they do not have an elaborate memorial of the sort mentioned in line 38, they still deserve homage or tribute. At the very least, he suggests, an onlooker should “sigh” on seeing their graves. Note here the multiple meanings we can attach to the word “passing.” It can refer to the onlooker, who is simply walking or “passing by” these graves. It can mean “in passing”—that someone seeing these graves should take just a moment out of their busy lives to remember the dead. And “passing” itself is a euphemism for death. In a way, then, Gray is suggesting that there is no difference between the person “passing” by the grave and the person who has “passed” away—another reminder that all will eventually die. **Lines 81-84:** Instead of “fame and elegy,” the people buried here have modest tombstones, which display only their names and the dates of their birth and death. These common people were not famous, and no one has written elaborate elegies or funeral verses for them. Still, the very modesty of their tombstones testifies to the nobility and “holy” nature of their simple lives. As such, they provide an example not so much of how life should be lived, but how its end, death, should be approached. The term “rustic moralist” here is open to interpretation. It may refer to anyone who is in the countryside thinking about the meaning of death. But more likely, it refers to the speaker, who is himself moralizing—preaching or contemplating—about the nature of both life and death. **Lines 85-88:** The speaker reasons that most people, faced with the prospect of dying and ultimately being forgotten, cling to life. Note Gray’s use of paradox in line 86: “this pleasing anxious being.” On the one hand, “being” or living can be “anxious,” filled with worries. On the other hand, just being alive—when faced with death—is itself “pleasing” or pleasant. The speaker is suggesting that even the troubles and worries of life are enjoyable in comparison to death. **Lines 89-92:** The dead rely on the living to remember them and to mourn for them. The speaker suggests that this need is so fundamental that even from the grave the buried dead seem to ask for remembrance. In fact, as line 92 suggests, the dead actually live on in our memories. **Lines 93-96:** In this stanza, the speaker addresses himself. He reasons that since he himself has been mindful of the dead, and has remembered and praised them in this poem, perhaps when he is dead someone will remember him. **Lines 97-100:** In the next five stanzas, the speaker imagines how an old farm laborer might remember him after his death. If, the speaker speculates, the “kindred Spirit” sees the speaker’s grave and wonders about it, perhaps an old man might offer to describe the speaker. The old man would say that the speaker was often seen wandering about the countryside at dawn. Presumably, he was frequently out all night — as, no doubt, he has been in this very poem. **Lines 101-104:** At noon, the old man continues, the speaker would frequently stretch out under an old tree at noon, and stare at a nearby brook. **Lines 105-108:** The old man would have observed that the speaker’s moods were changeable: sometimes the speaker would wander about in the nearby woods, “smiling scornfully” and talking to himself; other times, he would appear depressed; then again, sometimes he would look as though he were in anguish. Perhaps, the old man speculates, the speaker had been “crossed in hopeless love.” **Lines 109-112:** The speaker continues to imagine this old man remembering him after his death. The old man would have noticed one morning that the speaker was absent: he was not in any of his favourite spots. Likewise, the old man would remember, the speaker did not appear the following day. **Lines 113-116:** The third day, however, the old man and his friends would have seen the speaker’s body being carried to the churchyard for burial. (The speaker, then, is imagining himself buried in the very graveyard he once used to wander by.) The old man invites this curious passerby, or “kindred Spirit,” to read the speaker’s epitaph. Note the reminder that the old man is uneducated: he cannot read, although the passerby can do so. **Lines 117-120:** The last three stanzas are, in fact, the speaker’s epitaph; the way in which the speaker imagines his epitaph will read. Through the epitaph, the speaker asks the passerby (and the reader) not to remember him as wealthy, famous, or brilliantly educated, but as one who was “melancholic” or

deeply thoughtful and sad. **Lines 121-124:** The speaker asks that we remember him for being generous and sincere. His generosity was, in fact, his willingness to mourn for the dead. Because he was so generous, the speaker reasons, heaven gave him a “friend” — someone who would, in turn, mourn for him after his death. This friend is unnamed, but we can deduce that it is any “kindred Spirit” — including the reader — who reads the speaker’s epitaph and remembers him. **Lines 125-128:** The speaker concludes by cautioning the reader not to praise him any further. He also asks that his “frailties,” his flaws or personal weaknesses, not be considered; rather, they should be left to the care of God, with whom the speaker now resides. The poem, then, is an elegy not only for the common man, but for the speaker himself. Indeed, by the end of the poem it is evident that the speaker himself wishes to be identified not with the great and famous, but with the common people whom he has praised and with whom he will, presumably, be buried.

Dept. of English, TACS College, Sengaoon

O Captain! My Captain! By Walt Whitman

O Captain! My Captain! our fearful trip is done;
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won;
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring:
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.
O Captain! My Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills;
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head;
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.
My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won;
Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

Walt Whitman composed the poem "O Captain! My Captain!" after Abraham Lincoln's assassination in 1865. The poem is classified as an elegy or mourning poem, and was written to honor Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States. Walt Whitman was born in 1819 and died in 1892, and the American Civil War was the central event of his life. Whitman was a staunch Unionist during the Civil War. He was initially indifferent to Lincoln, but as the war pressed on Whitman came to love the president, though the two men never met.

The fallen captain in the poem refers to Abraham Lincoln, captain of the ship that is the United States of America. The first line establishes the poem's mood, one of relief that the Civil War has ended, "our fearful trip is done." The next line references the ship, America, and how it has "weathered every rack", meaning America has braved the tough storm of the Civil War, and "the prize we sought", the preservation of the Union, "is won". The following line expresses a mood of jubilation of the Union winning the war as it says "the people all exulting;" however, the next line swiftly shifts the mood when it talks of the grimness of the ship, and the darker side of the war. Many lost their lives in the American Civil War, and although the prize that was sought was won, the hearts still ache amidst the exultation of the people. The repetition of heart in line five calls attention to the poet's vast grief and heartache because the Captain has bled and lies still, cold, and dead (lines six through eight). This is no doubt referencing the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and Whitman's sorrow for the death of his idol.

In the second stanza the speaker again calls out to the captain to "rise up and hear the bells," to join in the celebration of the end of the war. The next three lines tell the captain to "rise up" and join in on the revelries because it is for him. He is the reason for their merriment: "for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills; for you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding; for you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning". Everyone is celebrating what Lincoln accomplished; the abolition of slavery and the unification of the people after a fearful war. Again the poet calls to the Captain as if he had never fallen. The poet does not wish to acknowledge the death of his beloved Captain, and he even asks if it is some dream (line 15) that the Captain has fallen "cold and dead".

The third stanza begins in a somber mood as the poet has finally accepted that the Captain is dead and gone. Here there is vivid and darker imagery such as "his lips are pale and still" and the reader can picture the

dead Captain lying there still and motionless with "no pulse nor will". In line 17, the poet calls out "My Captain," and in line 18, the poet refers to the Captain as "My father". This is referring to Lincoln as the father of the United States. Lines 19 and 20 are concluding statements that summarize the entire poem. The United States is "anchor'd safe and sound". It is safe now from war with "its voyage closed and done, from fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won". In line 21, the examples of apostrophe, ordering "shores to exult," and "bells to ring" are again referring to how the nation is celebrating while "I with mournful tread, Walk the deck my Captain lies, Fallen cold and dead".

Throughout the paper there is a distinct rhyme scheme, which is unusual for Whitman. The rhyme scheme in "O Captain! My Captain!" is AABCDEF, GGHIJEKE, and LLMNOEPE for each stanza respectively. Two examples of alliteration are in line 10 "flag is flung", as well as in line 19 "safe and sound". Repetition occurs many times in this poem, for example "O Captain! My Captain", and "fallen cold and dead".

"O Captain! My Captain!" became one of Whitman's most famous poems, one that he would read at the end of his famous lecture about the Lincoln assassination. Whitman became so identified with the poem that late in life he remarked, "Damn My Captain...I'm almost sorry I ever wrote the poem."

Analysis:

The poem is an elegy to the speaker's recently deceased Captain, at once celebrating the safe and successful return of their ship and mourning the loss of its great leader. In the first stanza, the speaker expresses his relief that the ship has reached its home port at last and describes hearing people cheering. Despite the celebrations on land and the successful voyage, the speaker reveals that his Captain's dead body is lying on the deck. In the second stanza, the speaker implores the Captain to "rise up and hear the bells," wishing the dead man could witness the elation. Everyone adored the captain, and the speaker admits that his death feels like a horrible dream. In the final stanza, the speaker juxtaposes his feelings of mourning and pride.

Whitman wrote this poem shortly after President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. It is an extended metaphor intended to memorialize Lincoln's life and work. The Captain represents the assassinated president; the ship represents the war-weathered nation following the Civil War; the "prize won" represents the salvaged union. The speaker, torn between relief and despair, captures America's confusion at the end of the Civil War. It was a time of many conflicting sentiments, and Whitman immortalizes this sense of uncertainty in "O Captain! My Captain!"

Whitman's poetry places a lot of emphasis on the individual. This particular poem explores a variation on that theme: the self-vs. the other. The speaker struggles with balancing his personal feelings of loss with the celebratory mood resulting from the successful voyage. While the Civil War claimed many lives, it led to the reunification of the Union, so many Americans felt similarly divided. In Whitman's poem, the speaker believes that he should be part of the "other" group, celebrating the return to safety. However, his inner thoughts set him apart from the crowd as he tries to reconcile his emotional reaction to the Captain's death.

"O Captain! My Captain!" is the only Walt Whitman poem that has a regular meter and rhyme scheme. Often hailed as "the father of free verse," Whitman tended to write his poems without following any kind of ordered poetic form. However, "O Captain! My Captain!" is organized into three eight-line stanzas, each with an AABBCDED rhyme scheme. Each stanza closes with the words "fallen cold and dead," and the first four lines of each stanza are longer than the last four lines. Because this poem is an elegy to the dead, the more traditional format adds to its solemnity. Additionally, the regular meter is reminiscent of a soldier marching across the battlefield, which is fitting for a poem that commemorates the end of the Civil War.

Daddy by Sylvia Plath

Daddy
You do not do, you do not do
Any more, black shoe
In which I have lived like a foot
For thirty years, poor and white,
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.
Daddy, I have had to kill you.
You died before I had time---
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,
Ghastly statue with one gray toe
Big as a Frisco seal
And a head in the freakish Atlantic
Where it pours bean green over blue
In the waters off the beautiful Nauset.
I used to pray to recover you.
Ach, du.
In the German tongue, in the Polish town
Scraped flat by the roller
Of wars, wars, wars.
But the name of the town is common.
My Polack friend
Says there are a dozen or two.
So I never could tell where you
Put your foot, your root,
I never could talk to you.
The tongue stuck in my jaw.
It stuck in a barb wire snare.
Ich, ich, ich, ich,
I could hardly speak.
I thought every German was you.
And the language obscene
An engine, an engine,
Chuffing me off like a Jew.
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.
I began to talk like a Jew.
I think I may well be a Jew.
The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of
Vienna
Are not very pure or true.
With my gypsy ancestress and my weird luck
And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack

I may be a bit of a Jew.
I have always been sacred of you,
With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.
And your neat mustache
And your Aryan eye, bright blue.
Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You---
Not God but a swastika
So black no sky could squeak through.
Every woman adores a Fascist,
The boot in the face, the brute
Brute heart of a brute like you.
You stand at the blackboard, daddy,
In the picture I have of you,
A cleft in your chin instead of your foot
But no less a devil for that, no not
Any less the black man who
Bit my pretty red heart in two.
I was ten when they buried you.
At twenty I tried to die
And get back, back, back to you.
I thought even the bones would do.
But they pulled me out of the sack,
And they stuck me together with glue.
And then I knew what to do.
I made a model of you,
A man in black with a Meinkampf look
And a love of the rack and the screw.
And I said I do, I do.
So daddy, I'm finally through.
The black telephone's off at the root,
The voices just can't worm through.
If I've killed one man, I've killed two---
The vampire who said he was you
And drank my blood for a year,
Seven years, if you want to know.
Daddy, you can lie back now.
There's a stake in your fat black heart
And the villagers never liked you.
They are dancing and stamping on you.
They always knew it was you.
Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.

Summary:

"Daddy," comprised of sixteen five-line stanzas, is a brutal and venomous poem commonly understood to be about Plath's deceased father, Otto Plath.

The speaker begins by saying that he "does not do anymore," and that she feels like she has been a foot living in a black shoe for thirty years, too timid to either breathe or sneeze. She insists that she needed to kill him (she refers to him as "Daddy"), but that he died before she had time. She describes him as heavy, like a "bag full of God," resembling a statue with one big gray toe and its head submerged in the Atlantic Ocean. She remembers how she at one time prayed for his return from death, and gives a German utterance of grief (which translates literally to "Oh, you").

She knows he comes from a Polish town that was overrun by "wars, wars, wars," but one of her Polack friends has told her that there are several towns of that name. Therefore, she cannot uncover his hometown, where he put his "foot" and "root."

She also discusses how she could never find a way to talk to him. Even before she could speak, she thought every German was him, and found the German language "obscene." In fact, she felt so distinct from him that she believed herself a Jew being removed to a concentration camp. She started to talk like a Jew and to feel like a Jew in several different ways. She wonders in fact, whether she might actually be a Jew, because of her similarity to a gypsy. To further emphasize her fear and distance, she describes him as the Luftwaffe, with a neat moustache and a bright blue Aryan eye. She calls him a "Panzer-man," and says he is less like God than like the black swastika through which nothing can pass. In her mind, "Every woman adores a Fascist," and the "boot in the face" that comes with such a man.

When she remembers Daddy, she thinks of him standing at the blackboard, with a cleft chin instead of a cleft foot. However, this transposition does not make him a devil. Instead, he is like the black man who "Bit [her] pretty red heart in two." He died when she was ten, and she tried to join him in death when she was twenty. When that attempt failed, she was glued back together. At this point, she realized her course - she made a model of Daddy and gave him both a "Meinkampf look" and "a love of the rack and the screw." She promises him that she is "finally through;" the telephone has been taken off the hook, and the voices can no longer get through to her.

She considers that if she has killed one man, then she has in fact killed two. Comparing him to a vampire, she remembers how he drank her blood for a year, but then realizes the duration was closer to seven years. She tells him he can lie back now. There is a stake in his heart, and the villagers who despised him now celebrate his death by dancing on his corpse. She concludes by announcing, "Daddy, Daddy, you bastard, I'm through."

Analysis:

"Daddy" is perhaps Sylvia Plath's best-known poem. It has elicited a variety of distinct reactions, from feminist praise of its unadulterated rage towards male dominance, to wariness at its usage of Holocaust imagery. It has been reviewed and criticized by hundreds and hundreds of scholars, and is upheld as one of the best examples of confessional poetry.

It is certainly a difficult poem for some: its violent imagery, invocation of Jewish suffering, and vitriolic tone can make it a decidedly uncomfortable reading experience. Overall, the poem relates Plath's journey of coming to terms with her father's looming figure; he died when she was eight. She casts herself as a victim and him as several figures, including a Nazi, vampire, devil, and finally, as a resurrected figure her husband, whom she has also had to kill.

Though the final lines have a triumphant tone, it is unclear whether she means she has gotten "through" to him in terms of communication, or whether she is "through" thinking about him. Plath explained the poem briefly in a BBC interview:

The poem is spoken by a girl with an Electra complex. The father died while she thought he was God. Her case is complicated by the fact that her father was also a Nazi and her mother very possibly part Jewish. In the daughter the two strains marry and paralyze each other - she has to act out the awful little allegory once over before she is free of it.

In other words, contradiction is at the heart of the poem's meaning. Neither its triumph nor its horror is to be taken as the sum total of her intention. Instead, each element is contradicted by its opposite, which explains how it shoulders so many distinct interpretations.

This sense of contradiction is also apparent in the poem's rhyme scheme and organization. It uses a sort of nursery rhyme, singsong way of speaking. There are hard sounds, short lines, and repeated rhymes (as in "Jew," "through," "do," and "you"). This establishes and reinforces her status as a childish figure in relation to her authoritative father. This relationship is also clear in the name she uses for him - "Daddy"- and in her use of "oo" sounds and a childish cadence. However, this childish rhythm also has an ironic, sinister feel, since the chant-like, primitive quality can feel almost like a curse. One critic wrote that the poem's "simplistic, insistent rhythm is one form of control, the obsessive rhyming and repeated short phrases are others, means by which she attempts to charm and hold off evil spirits." In other words, the childish aspects have a crucial, protective quality, rather than an innocent one.

"Daddy" can also be viewed as a poem about the individual trapped between herself and society. Plath weaves together patriarchal figures – a father, Nazis, a vampire, a husband – and then holds them all accountable for history's horrors. Like "The Colossus," "Daddy" imagines a larger-than-life patriarchal figure, but here the figure has a distinctly social, political aspect. Even the vampire is discussed in terms of its tyrannical sway over a village. In this interpretation, the speaker comes to understand that she must kill the father figure in order to break free of the limitations that it places upon her. In particular, these limitations can be understood as patriarchal forces that enforce a strict gender structure. It has the feel of an exorcism, an act of purification. And yet the journey is not easy. She realizes what she has to do, but it requires a sort of hysteria. In order to succeed, she must have complete control, since she fears she will be destroyed unless she totally annihilates her antagonist. #

The question about the poem's confessional, autobiographical content is also worth exploring. The poem does not exactly conform to Plath's biography, and her above-cited explanation suggests it is a carefully-constructed fiction. And yet its ambivalence towards male figures does correspond to the time of its composition - she wrote it soon after learning that her husband Ted Hughes had left her for another woman. Further, the mention of a suicide attempt links the poem to her life.

However, some critics have suggested that the poem is actually an allegorical representation of her fears of creative paralysis, and her attempt to slough off the "male muse." Stephen Gould Axelrod writes that "at a basic level, 'Daddy' concerns its own violent, transgressive birth as a text, its origin in a culture that regards it as illegitimate – a judgment the speaker hurls back on the patriarch himself when she labels *him* a bastard." The father is perceived as an object and as a mythical figure (many of them, in fact), and never really attains any real human dimensions. It is less a person than a stifling force that puts its boot in her face to silence her. From this perspective, the poem is inspired less by Hughes or Otto than by agony over creative limitations in a male literary world. However, even this interpretation begs something of an autobiographical interpretation, since both Hughes and her father were representations of that world.

Plath's usage of Holocaust imagery has inspired a plethora of critical attention. She was not Jewish but was in fact German, yet was obsessed with Jewish history and culture. Several of her poems utilize Holocaust themes and imagery, but this one features the most striking and disturbing ones. She imagines herself being taken on a train to "Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen," and starting to talk like a Jew and feel like a Jew. She refers to her father as a "panzer-man," and notes his Aryan looks and his "Luftwaffe" brutality. One of the leading articles on this topic, written by Al Strangeways, concludes that Plath was using her poetry to understand the connection between history and myth, and to stress the voyeurism that is an implicit part of remembering. Plath had studied the Holocaust in an academic context, and felt a connection to it; she also felt like a victim, and wanted to combine the personal and public in her work to cut through the stagnant double-talk of Cold War America. She certainly uses Holocaust imagery, but does so alongside other violent myths and history, including those of Electra, vampirism, and voodoo. Strangeways writes that, "the Holocaust assumed a mythic dimension because of its extremity and the difficulty of understanding it in human terms, due to the mechanical efficiency with which it was carried out, and the inconceivably large number of victims." In other words, its shocking content is not an accident, but is rather an attempt to consider how the 20th century's great atrocity reflects and escalates a certain human quality.

Indeed, it is hard to imagine that any of Sylvia Plath's poems could leave the reader unmoved. "Daddy" is evidence of her profound talent, part of which rested in her unabashed confrontation with her personal history and the traumas of the age in which she lived. That she could write a poem that encompasses both the personal and historical is clear in "Daddy."

Daddy by Sylvia Plath: Critical Analysis:

This poem is a very strong expression of resentment against the male domination of women and also the violence of all kinds for which man is responsible. The speaker expresses her rage against her 'daddy', but daddy himself is a symbol of male.

As well as a symbol of more general agents and forces like science and reason, violence and war, the German and their Hitler, and all other "inhuman" agents of oppression in the world. The speaker is also a symbol of female and the creative force, humility, love and humanity in general.

This poem can also be analyzed from a psychological point of view. It is the outpour of a neurotic anger through the channel of creative art, or poetry. It is a kind of therapy. The poem is also significant for its

assonance, allusion and images. Though it is slightly autobiographical, the poem must be interpreted symbolically and psychologically without limiting it to the poetess's life and experiences also.

The poem begins with the angry attack on daddy: "you", "black shoe", "I have had to kill you". The name-calling continues: daddy is a ghostly statue, a seal, a German, Hitler himself, a man-crushing engine, a tank driver (Panzer man), a swastika symbol of the Nazi, a devil, a haunting ghost and vampire, and so on. The speaker has lived for thirty years, poor and white, as in the Nazi concentration camps of the Second World War. She is not able to breathe or express her pain. Her tongue is stuck in her jaw, or in the barbell wires. She is always scared of daddy or the German images of terror. She feels like a Jew herself. She feels she is crushed under the roller as the Polish were killed by the German in 1941.

She is afraid of the German language that is obscene and vague. She remembers the concentration camps like Dachau, Auschwitz and Belsen where thousands of Jews were tortured and killed. She feels she is a descendant of a gypsy ancestress (ancient mother). She is afraid of the neat mustache like that of Hitler, and the Aryan eye. The image of a boot in the face comes to her troubled mind. She thinks her daddy had a brutish (savage) black heart. She remembers the image of a strict teacher near the blackboard, which is also her father's image. She was ten when he died. But she wanted to kill him again, and throw him out of her mind. She also tried to die herself, but they prevented her. Then she made an effigy or (model) of him and killed it. She had killed him and his vampire that drank her blood for seven years. She claims that all the villagers also hated and still hate him. So, he can go back and die forever. She calls him a bastard.

The extremity of anger in this poem is not justifiable as something possible with a normal person in real life. We should understand that this is partly due to the neurosis that Plath was actually suffering from. Besides, it is essential to understand from the psychoanalytical point of view, the poem does not literally express reality alone: it is the relieving anger and frustration, and an alternative outlet of the neurotic energy in the form of poetic expression. Furthermore, it is necessary to understand the anger as being directed against the general forces of inhumanity, violence and destruction only symbolized by 'daddy'. In fact, Plath's father loved her very much when she was a child, before he died when she was only eight. So her death was always a shock to her. But, while she felt tortured and destitute without her father, she also felt suppressed by her father's dominating image. The idea is mixed and complex. She said, "He was an autocrat... I adored and despaired him, and I probably wished many times that he were dead". The poem moves far beyond the father-daughter team if we read carefully. By a process of association and surrealism, the protest moves from father to Hitler and then to inhumanity and oppression. Sylvia Plath also said that "the personal experience is very important, but... I believe (poetry) should be relevant to larger things such as Hiroshima and Dachau and so on." This means that the frustration and anger against a dominating father who left her a destitute has here become a starting point or central symbol for larger issues including Hitler, torture and inhumanity. The poem is, therefore, also about the victimization of modern war. The poem is only slightly autobiographical, but it is more general.

The theme of female protest is perhaps the most striking symbolic meaning in the poem. The female speaker represents the creative force and she is angry with the destructive forces symbolized by her daddy and the male. But, we should also see the poem as a psychological poem that allows the speaker to relieve her neurotic energy through the channel of creativity. The speaker says, "I'm through", meaning "I'm satisfied" at the end. She is relieved. The allusions of the Second World War are all real. The anger against the German, soldiers, Hitler and his Nazi party is not too much. The reader will justify this anger if he tries to imagine the inhumanity of Hitler.

Do not Go Gentle in that Good Night by Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night, Old age should burn and rave at close of day; Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Though wise men at their end know dark is right, Because their words had forked no lightning they Do not go gentle into that good night. Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay, Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Wild men who caught and sang the sun in	flight, And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way, Do not go gentle into that good night. Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay, Rage, rage against the dying of the light. And you, my father, there on the sad height, Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray. Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
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Summary and Critical Analysis:

In the poem *Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night* the poet clarifies that the poem was an invocation to his dying father. The poet entreats his father to struggle hard against death. The hard struggle has been well implied by the word “rage” and its repetition. At this last moment of death, the poet becomes frustrated and desperate and wishes his father to cure for the wrongs done by him and bless for the good ones. This antithetical expression portrays the tense state of mind of the poet. He again invokes his father not to give but to fight for life.

As the poem “Do not Go Gentle into the Good Night” is full of contradictions and paradoxes, the three lines above also contradict with the preceding three lines where the poet says that wise people know that “darkness is right or death is invincible and it is right because they have not composed great poetry which would make them immortal. Here, in these three lines, the poet says that the people of action also grieve as they will die even before they have finished their work. Thus, approaching of “death” grieves both the sorts, of people- one whose words have not forked lightning and the other who are seriously engaged in their work.

We encounter the optimistic ideas of one of the most complicated modern British poets from the poem “Do not Go Gentle into that Good Night”, whose poems are full of strange linguistic expression. Here the poet says that only sincere and mature men are able to resist the fear of death. This is because of their optimism and strong determination. Even with their failing eyesight, they can see afar. Their blind eyes are also glittering and are always gay. The poet says man can make himself as he wishes but he must have the will, courage and determination for it.

The poem “Do not Go Gentle into that Good Night” can be better understood by understanding the symbols of Dylan Thomas. “Good-night” implies farewell. This farewell may be temporary or permanent. This permanent farewell is death. The poet’s father is lying on the bed of death and the poet requests or rather appeals to him not to die without working for life. He entreats him to fight against death. “Good night”, “close of day” and “dying of the light”- all these three phrases imply death. “Rave” and “Rage” are the words through which the poet appeals to his father for his revival. The poet says that though wise people know that death is inevitable and it cannot be averted, they strive for their life. “Dark” is here the symbol of death. They prefer darkness because they have not composed good poetry which will make them immortal: “because their words had forked no lightning.” The repetition of “do not go gentle into that good night” in the stanzas strengthens the poet’s appeal made for his father’s life. This is also a feature of a villanelle. Villanelle consists of five tercets and a quatrain, all on two rhymes, and with systematic repetitions of lines 1 and 3 of the first tercet.

The poem is an appeal of the poet to his father suggesting that he must try to save himself from death, though death is inevitable and cannot be averted. Even the wisest men try to escape the cold grip of death. When death is imminent, these wise people suddenly grow repentant of their serious acts. They think that they have wasted their merry moments in serious acts and this negative or pessimistic thinking often lead to their frustration. On the other hand, men of action also repent as death approaches to them even before their actions are completed. Only “grave-men” have realized the inevitable truth about death through their divine or poetic illumination. The poem consists of six stanzas. Five stanzas consist of three lines each and the final stanza is a quatrain. The five stanzas which consist of three lines have the rhyme-scheme of aba, aba and the quatrain rhymes abaa. The first and the last line of the first tercet are alternatively repeated as refrains at the end of each following tercet.

This is a poem about the joy and sadness that comes with the flash of burning life soon blown out with nothing more than a sigh. It focuses on the sadness as those we care for go far too gently into that good night. Of those who left before their time. As this poem was written specifically for Thomas's dying father it is even more poignant in the emotional weight the words convey. This poem radiates with intensity, in particular, the verse beginning: "wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight" is simply beautiful poetry.

Addressed to the poet's father as he approaches blindness and death. The relevant aspect of the relationship was Thomas's profound respect for his father, tall and strong in Thomas's passionate mind but now tamed by illness and the passing of time. The acceptance of death and a peaceful rest afterwards are pushed aside in favour of an ungentle rage so blind it almost mirrors the vigor of childhood frustration at the nature of things we are powerless to change. Furthermore, the poem speaks as much of the loss of love and the feelings of one left behind as of death itself. The meaning of the poem stays shrouded in metaphors like the references to night as "good". He acknowledged his father stood somewhere he had not, and perhaps saw what he could not. Thomas was not ready to let go of such an important part of his life even though his father was facing an irreversible course, and Thomas's grief was perhaps all the greater. His statement of this love and grief remain touching. Perhaps the feelings of his fading father should have been more important than his own rage. These emotions seem to run unchallenged throughout the poem even though the style beckons structure and discipline within the theme of "night" and "light". In the tercets Thomas gives examples of men who meet death differently yet alike. The first are "wise men," perhaps philosophers. They know "dark is right" because they know what to look for at the end of life. In spite of their wisdom, however, they "do not go gentle" because their words "had forked no lightning." This phrase has the force of a symbol suggesting that wise men had lacked the ultimate power of nature.

Thomas therefore seems to be saying that the wise men were not wise enough, that their words created no ultimate linguistic reality but vague speculation of death as a good thing. Subsequently, the good men of the third tercet permitted life to pass them by. The festive imagery of "bright / Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay," evokes a wonder world of joyful activities in contrast with the "frail deeds." Why, we wonder, do the good men regret the past just as the last wave goes by? As for the style it is most definitely an elevated style of poetic diction within a villanelle format. The term originated in Italy (Italian villanella from villano: "peasant"); and later used in France to designate a short poem of popular character favored by poets in the late 16th century. Five tercets are followed by a quatrain, with the first and last line of the stanza repeated alternately as the last line of the subsequent stanzas and gathered into a couplet at the end of the quatrain. The stanza is repeated for dramatic effect and tone: "Rage, rage against the dying of the light". In this case this particular stanza, gaining much of its impact from repetition and variation, paints a clear a definite picture of the author's strong emotions.

And all this on only two rhymes. Thomas further compounds his difficulty by having each line contain about the same amount of syllables. The villanelle seems like a very regimented and difficult form; the effortless ease with which Thomas makes it appear adds clarity to the complex emotions describes in the poem. The rhetoric is never jumbled or ruff, and always profoundly moving; the images are far reaching, yet terribly true; the complicated rhyme scheme simply adds to the many dimensions of the poem. In conclusion, the events surrounding Thomas at the time do not make up all the character of this poem. As it is often the case, this work stands on its own. It either speak to one, or not. But no matter what personal reasons inspired Thomas, the poem speaks to our need to make our lives count against our inevitable deaths. Though the theme is paradoxical, it declares to all: Live your life while you are actually dying. Do not accept death passively. Live intensely and resist death passionately. All the beautifully contrasting metaphors where Thomas's way of gracefully asking his father not to leave him alone, in the dark.

The Convergence of the Twain by Thomas Hardy

(Lines on the loss of the "Titanic")

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.
Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine fires,
Cold currents thrud, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.
Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls — grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.
Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.
Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?" ...
Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything
Prepared a sinister mate
For her — so gaily great —
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.
And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.
Alien they seemed to be;
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,
Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event,
Till the Spinner of the Years
Said "Now!" And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

Biography:

Thomas Hardy was born June 2, 1840 in the village of Upper Bockhampton, located in South-western England. His father was a stone-mason and a violinist. His mother enjoyed reading and retelling folk songs and legends popular in the region. From his family, Hardy gained the interests that would influence his life and appear in his novels: architecture and music, the lifestyles of the country folk, and literature itself.

From 1867, Hardy wrote poetry and novels, though the first part of his career was devoted mostly to novels. At first, he published anonymously, but after people became interested in his work, he began to use his own name. Like the work of his contemporary Charles Dickens, Hardy's novels were published serially in magazines, and they became popular in both England and America. His first popular novel was *Under the Greenwood Tree*, published in 1872. The next great novel, *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), was so popular that the profits allowed Hardy to give up architecture and marry Emma Gifford. Other popular novels followed in quick succession: *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). In addition to these long works, Hardy published three collections of short stories and five shorter novels, all moderately successful. However, despite the praise Hardy's fiction received, many critics were offended by their violence and sexual content, especially in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. The outcry against *Jude* was so great that Hardy decided to stop writing novels and return to his first great love, poetry.

After a long and highly successful career, Thomas Hardy died on January 11, 1928, at the age of 87. His ashes were buried in Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey. After his death, Florence published Hardy's autobiography in two parts under her own name. Hardy bequeathed many of his possessions to the nation, most notably his pens. Hardy personally engraved each bone handle with the name of the text it was used to write.

Background of the Poem:

This poem was read first at a concert planned as a charity event for the victims of the Titanic disaster. Titanic sank on 12 April 1912. The manuscript of this poem bears the date 24 April 1912. Coming so soon after the disaster, readers may expect outpourings of grief or anger at God's action that resulted in the loss of 1500 lives. But this poem has none of that. Instead it has criticism of man's vanity and the acceptance of the unstoppable nature of fate.

Summary:

The poem takes an unemotional look at the sinking of the Titanic. The ship had been conceived as the last word in luxury, it resembled a floating palace with sweeping staircases and ballrooms. The rich and the famous of that time were on the passenger manifest. But ironically none of the pomp and splendor that marked the ship were of any use to them. Now the ship lies at the bottom of the sea. The jewels and the mirrors that fed the vanity of mankind are inspected with curiosity with fish and sea worms. Technology had come into conflict with the force of nature and nature won. From Stanza VI onwards, the poet moves on to the inevitability of the decree of Fate. Here he calls it Immanent Will. The ship and the iceberg take birth at the same time. They both grow unknown to each other. When the "Speaker of the Years" or an omniscient power decides, the "Twain" meet resulting in the loss of 1500 lives.

Stanza 1: The poet introduces the setting of the sea in the first line itself. The ship conceived as the ultimate symbol of man's vanity rests at the bottom of the sea far away from humanity for whom it was meant. The rhyme scheme is AAA. The very structure of the stanza physically resembles an ocean liner. **Stanza 2:** At the bottom of the ocean are the steel chambers that formed the core of the ship. The huge fires that power the ship are dead. Instead the ship moves as determined by tidal swells. **Stanza 3:** Sea worms crawl over the huge mirrors that were to reflect the opulence of the interiors of the ship. The mirrors not only serve no meaningful purpose here but juxtaposed with sea worms, bring to us the notion of the emptiness of vanity. **Stanza 4:** Exquisite jewels fashioned to charm the "sensuous mind" lie in the darkness of the ocean's floor. No human eye can gaze at their beauty so they have no value. **Stanza 5:** The fish that wander in and out gaze at all this, and wonder why these trinkets that pander to human vanity are lying there at the bottom on the sea. **Stanza 6:** While this sleek and fast ship was being made, other things were set in motion by the divine force that moves and controls everything. The poet capitalizes Immanent Will to show its importance and force. **Stanza 7:** The Immanent Will has chosen for this brittle but pretty ship, a mate that is just its opposite. It is a sinister hulk of ice. The die is cast for an event that is still far in the future. **Stanza 8:** In the dark mysterious depths of the ocean the iceberg keeps growing even as the ship takes shape too. **Stanza 9:** So different were they, no human eye could have ever discerned that their later lives would be intimately linked. **Stanza 10:** No one could have understood that their paths would soon meet even though they were the two halves of an unstoppable event. **Stanza 11:** That moment comes when the "Spinner of the Years" gives the signal to set in motion the final event or the consummation of two incompatible halves.

Themes:

The Hubris of Man: In a way, the Titanic becomes a figure in a Greek tragedy in this poem in that through no fault of its own it becomes a victim of man's hubris at defying the fates. The very first pronouncement by anyone within the process that the ship was unsinkable should have signaled its doom. Merely to thrust one's finger at the gods like that almost inevitably seal your doom. The precise construction of the poem afford Hardy the opportunity to draw the parallel between the majesty of what the Titanic was promised to be and the reality that an unseen force of nature had in store for it.

The Forces of the Immanent Will: One aspect that the impressive formulation of the poem cannot hide is the utter lack of any sympathy for the victims that sunk down to the bottom of ocean with the liner or the survivors still just a few weeks removed from the experience when the poem was published. This absence is so glaring within a poem so perfectly organized that there can be no doubt Hardy did it on purpose. That purpose may quite possibly have been informed by his wise recognition that composition while every day was bringing a new round of information about the tragedy faced certain doom in trying to get a handle on the unimaginable emotional turmoil even those not on the ship were still trying to deal with. Without question, Hardy wanted to approach the subject from a most cosmological perspective that could seek to find logic and reason precisely in the place where logic and reason failed to satisfy an emotional response: the forces of the Immanent Will in which the only thing known for sure is that it is unknowable.

Bride and Groom Predestined to Marry as Strangers: The logic of the forces of an unknowable Immanent Will guiding the *Titanic* to its tragic fate also created room for Hardy to introduce the most controversial aspect of his poetic analysis of the sinking. In keeping with the theme of the *Titanic* as a victim of Greek tragedy's human hubris, his poem ends with the unlikely introduction of the ironic components at play in Greek tragedy. Hardy's central bit of thematic imagery is to portray the ship built by men and the iceberg built by nature as predestined to meet as strangers much like the bride and groom in arranged marriages. The final ironic punctuation to this imagery is the very unique description of the collision between ice and steel as a "consummation" of this marriage that was always meant to be.

Analysis:

"The Convergence of the Twain" by Thomas Hardy recounts the downfall of the *Titanic*, poetically describing the sinking, manufacturing, and colliding of the glorious ocean liner. However, he also discusses the sybaritic vanity of the ship, using the event to symbolize the destruction of man's hubris through divine and natural means. The tragedy is depicted as an external conflict between a boat and iceberg but symbolically represents the opposition of man to God and nature, causing the speaker to have a critical tone towards hubristic humanity.

The juxtapositions made within the first five stanzas reflect the speaker's critical tone towards the endeavor of humanity to build the grandiose *Titanic*, suggesting that he or she detests the offensive display of vanity and hubris. The metonymy of the "Pride of Life" (3) for mankind with their "human vanity" (2) conveys the disapproval of the speaker, the words "pride" and "vanity" connoting the extravagant features that offend God with their hedonistic qualities. Furthermore, the speaker's juxtaposition of "the mirrors meant / to glass the opulent" (7-8) to "the sea-worm...grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent" (9) and the "jewels in joy" (10) to lightless masses within the water, reiterates the useless vanity of the ship; only anthropomorphic "moon-eyed fishes" (13) can view and question "this vaingloriousness" (15) now. Thus, the critical tone of the speaker and juxtapositions of vain luxuries to their inevitable fate connects the "Pride of Life" (3) to the "Immanent Will" (18), thereby establishing the conflict of man against God and nature.

The speaker's insidious diction and foreboding tone reflects the opposition between the *Titanic* and the iceberg, symbolizing the overall theme of the conflict of man against nature and God. The speaker refers to God as "The Immanent Will" that "stirs and urges everything" (18), the word "immanent," which connotes God, being a pun for "imminent" that reflects the inevitable conflict of the crash of the *Titanic* into the iceberg. Furthermore, the personification of the iceberg as "a sinister mate" (19) that grew "in shadowy silent distance" (24) characterizes it with assassin-like attributes, the sibilance and imagery conveying the insidious aspects of the crash's inexorability and unexpectedness for "mortal [eyes]" (26), the metonymies of "mortal eye" (26) and "Immanent Will" (18) representing the bigger conflict of man versus God and nature. The speaker's foreboding tone reiterates the symbolism of the poem's conflict by illustrating that mankind's hubris cannot conquer the omnipotent, thereby establishing the futility of human vanity.

The metaphoric marriage of the ship and iceberg within the final section of the poem reiterates the man versus nature conflict, emphasizing that nature and God trump the vanity and hubris of mankind. The speaker personifies the iceberg as "a sinister mate" (21) for "her - gaily great" (22), the antecedent of "her" referring to the *Titanic* and personifying it as a bride, thereby conveying that they were destined to converge. This is reaffirmed by the pun of "intimate welding" (27), the word "welding" denoting a coming together of materials whereas "wedding" denotes a coming together of people, the double meaning illustrating both the physical *Titanic*'s crash and the bride *Titanic*'s marriage to the iceberg. Furthermore, the idea that the iceberg and ship are "anon twin halves" (30) that the "Spinner of the Years" commands to consummate, expresses a theme of predestination whereby the collision was inevitable due to the will of God. Thus, the speaker's marital metaphor expresses the inevitability of the man versus God and nature conflict, reiterating the themes that fate decides the events of mankind and no amount of vanity or hubris can change destiny.

The *Titanic* is symbolic of the pride and vanity of humanity in opposition to the natural power of God that is exhibited through the iceberg. The ship's sinking as a result of the iceberg metaphorically illustrates the triumph of God and nature over the pinnacle of mankind's creation. Thus, by depicting the hubris and vanity of mankind against the omnipotent, the poem serves to demonstrate the inevitable defeat of mankind by divine power in conflict, thereby reinforcing the futility of man against God and nature.

Symbols, Allegory and Motifs:

The Title: Hardy wrote a poem laden with symbols, metaphor, imagery and a host of other literary devices with which to work out his overriding theme, but any consideration of the most important symbolic attributes has to begin before the beginning: the title itself is a symbolic image rich with meaning. The paradox is amply evidence: “twain” is an archaic word meaning two of something that has taken the connotation of something that has been divided in order to create two from one. Convergence connotes the exact opposite: instead of being separated into two, multiplicities join back together along a single axis. The duality inherent in the symbolic opposites of the poem’s title will be reflected in the very structural integrity of the poem’s design.

The Iceberg: The first six stanzas are all about the Titanic and the vanity of men who rejoiced prematurely at their overpowering the forces of nature by creating a thing which nature could destroy. The unsinkable Titanic by definition is endowed with the personification of feminine properties: ships are always referred to as “she.” Stanza VII introduces her male counterpart: the iceberg who is more than just a convenient male symbol, but her the mate to whom she is predestined to meet and wed.

Immanent Will: The Titanic thus becomes a symbolically feminine as a creation of man. If the iceberg is the groom nervous but patiently awaiting the date of their arranged wedding, would it not stand to reason it also had a creator? The final line of the sixth stanza answers that question in the form of a force known as the Immanent Will. This force directing the fates is unknowable to man who is nevertheless at its mercy and it is this force that both shaped the ship’s icy mate and directed the groom on his progress to that predetermined time and place at which the couple would meet and marry. The Immanent Force is a pure symbol, devoid of form and shape but always lingering nearby in its hidden presence.

A Hidden Monument to Man's Excessive Pride: The fifth stanza introduces almost a whimsical element in the form of a fish who stops to stare at the massive ship lying motionless far beneath the world above. Recognizing that the strange structure is hopelessly out of place in his world under the sea, the fish is even moved to question why something that seems to even within its rightful place to be primarily a monument to its creator’s sense of glorious accomplishment is even down there in the first place. In that moment, the Titanic’s majesty above the waves becomes every bit as foolhardy as its future as a ghostly coffin below; its sinking forever transforming it into a symbol of over the overreach of pride.

The Marriage Consummated: The final symbolic metaphor of punctuating Hardy’s thematic conceit of the meeting between ship and ice as a pre-arranged marriage is the image of the collision not in language expressing how the ice ripped the ship in twain, but how their meeting was an inevitable convergence of the symbolic male and female. The iceberg’s penetration through the ship’s steel structure is given the ironic and unexpected description as a consummation by Hardy, a consummation that invisible forces shaping our destiny would not allow to be subverted by human interference.