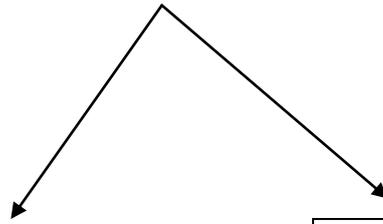


**MODERNISM IN LITERATURE:** Cultural movement that refers to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century



1910s-1920s → REVOLUTIONARY PHASE → the beginning of a new movement is always more revolutionary than the later development of the movement itself because a break with whatever has been done in the past is needed

1930s-1940s → EXPERIMENTATION + EXPLORATION of new ideas and techniques

- Historical Background Timeline: p. 265 + Reading from p.266 to p. 275
- Prose: Woolf and Joyce
- **Poetry:**
  - ❖ Symbolism and Free Verse (p.280)
  - ❖ Imagism – Ezra Pound
  - ❖ W.B. Yeats
  - ❖ T.S. Eliot
  - ❖ War poetry: concentrated just on the perception of the description of the war experience in their works. Not general feeling or uncertainty (only the feelings of young soldiers during the war. In the case of WWI, the feelings derived from trench war)

Preview from Notesale.co.uk  
Page 1 of 24

**Recurrent themes:**

- ABOLITION OF THE PAST (NEWNESS) → Especially in the revolutionary phase refers to the abolition of the past and a new idea of what is new, of whatever is considered innovation, revision of past values. However, when you destroy something you need new bases to create something new  
↓
- RETURN TO THE PRIMITIVE (MYTH) → T.S. Eliot reproduces mythical elements of the past to give new bases to his production (≈ Joyce in Ulysses)
- “ANTI” EVERYTHING → Modernism poses itself as an anti-movement in all fields: music, architecture, arts → Creation of basis which reject whatever was produced previously
  - Music → atonalism
  - Arts: anti-representational paintings
  - Poetry: free verse
  - Prose writing: stream of consciousness

- Image of the falcon: mankind
- Falconer = any form of authority and power
- Ceremony of innocence → Image of innocent people who are slaughtered
- The ones who represent the worst part of society are full of passionate intensity, therefore they seem to be the winners

## 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza

The focus and tone changes. He says that there is something he can now reveal: he opens the stanza stating that a second coming is about to come. He repeats surely twice.

Exclamation mark → Symbol of the intensity of this formal announcement by the poet, but soon after it we perceive from these lines that the second coming is not expected to be a positive one as the first one

Spiritual Mundi → For Yeats represents the Great Memory, which troubles the sight of the poet

He describes the setting where the second coming will take place: desert, in the distance he perceives a shape (lifeless shape) with a lion body and the head of a man → Sphynx- like image that has an expression in its face is blank and pitiless. This shape is huge and moves its thighs (membra) slowly

v. 17 → Reel of the birds also referring to the movement of the gyre

As soon as the poet perceives this shape, there is darkness again → The 2<sup>nd</sup> coming hasn't brought light with it, it's not a real revelation, but only the anticipation of something dreadful which will menace the life of ordinary people

20 centuries of sleep: gyre

Rocking cradle → Symbolic → Cradle of Christ

These 20 centuries have brought men to this crisis and everything moved from the rocking cradle, the image of Christ

But now it is time for this rough beast to appear (the beast is what was previously referred to as a shape)

Bethlehem rocking cradle and second coming → Remind of the coming of Christ which Yeats reinterprets imagining a new coming which will imply a moment of anarchy, confusion and disintegration of everything around him

This is the one poem which, according to the critics, can be interpreted in two different ways:

The 1<sup>st</sup> stanza can be read as an example of war poetry → The poet analyses the effects that the war had on the minds of the people of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

The 2<sup>nd</sup> is more a prophetic vision of how the reality of people will change because of all the historical events of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yeats analyses the ways these tragic and world-wide events will affect the future of mankind

A tedious argument → boring and intricate at the same time

These thoughts and streets lead you to an overwhelming question → Prufrock's existential question that everybody has, but which he says not to ask.

We have dived into his thoughts, but we are now coming back to reality. He is probably paying a visit to some place (a house in which there is a party)

### **Refrain**

He describes a room in which there are some women with long and elegant skirts who walk through the room and talk about Michelangelo. Why Michelangelo? Because of the heroic values of mankind he portrayed.

### **2nd stanza**

He describes the house from the outside: yellow fog and smoke which implies ambiguity, mystery covering the house, they imprison people inside. Both the fog and the smoke are compared to the movement of cats: they rug their back/muzzle on the window-panes. The smoke and the fog penetrate the evening with their yellowish house, their movements around the house are described. At the end, they completely cover the house, so there is no more possibility for the people inside this place to look outside. This description ends exactly as it started and the theme of time is introduced. Eliot doesn't mind wasting his time, he says that there will be time for the yellow smoke "to prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet" → philosophical concept. Eliot expresses his feeling for not being always accepted for what he is. To prepare oneself before meeting other people.

Time for you and time for me → reference to a possible love song

There is time to do something in life, since life is made up of a sequence of actions and thoughts, but there will also be time for a 100 indecisions, visions and revisions → there seems to be no certainty for Prufrock. As soon as we have a vision and we may feel we have come to a final decision, we realize that it is time for revising. When do we have time for all this? Before the taling of a toast and tea → reference to the trivial pleasant things of everybody's everyday life. The tea ceremony was a pleasant break. It is a fall in the tone → Eliot first keeps the read focused on serious things, but soon after he breaks these tensions.

### **Refrain**

After taking the tea, Eliot talks again about the women in the room.

### **3rd stanza**

Then the poet states that there will be time to wonder, to question other people. The poet asks himself: "Do I dare?" → progression of the poet's thoughts. It is the first question he asks himself. Then he says there is time "to turn back and descend the stair" → this image implies you are about to make a decision, to knock on the door, but instead you turn back → dimension of not acting. In Hamlet (To be or not to be), there is the same act: should I act and kill Claudius or not? He is becoming bold, others will notice it and make unpleasant comments about it. The poet is not

<p>A hard time we had of it.  At the end we preferred to travel all night,  Sleeping in snatches,  With the voices singing in our ears, saying  That this was all folly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Instead of stopping in these unfriendly and dirty places, they decide to keep travelling.</li> <li>○ They feel as if they heard voices telling them that what they are doing is absurd.</li> </ul>
<p>Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;  With a running stream and a water-mill beating the  darkness,  And three trees on the low sky,  And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the  lintel,  Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.  But there was no information, and so we continued  And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon  Finding the place; it was (you might say) satisfactory.</p>	<p>There is an atmosphere of vitality that differs from the desert land described in the hollow men.</p> <p>Water = life, vitality, purification</p> <p>Three trees = remind of the three crosses on the low sky.</p> <p>They are travelling, but they don't know exactly what direction they are following. They keep going because they know they have to arrive on time for the occasion.</p> <p>As soon as they get where they are expected to be, they find satisfaction.</p> <p>You might say":</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ involves the ideal silence audience of any dramatic monologue</li> <li>○ the experience becomes universal</li> </ul>
<p>All this was a long time ago, I remember,  And I would do it again, but set down  This set down  This: were we led all that way for  Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly  We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and  death,  But had thought they were different; this Birth was  Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  With an alien people clutching their gods.  I should be glad of another death.</p>	<p>The magus is back to their present life. He is meditating on the effects these experiences had on them and on us all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ He would repeat this journey again</li> <li>○ Breaking of the language (like the Hollow Men) → the magus doesn't need to reveal explicitly his feelings, he only needs a few words to do so. This is the phase of sharing the greatness and richness of their experiences with the whole mankind</li> <li>○ Rhetorical question → the Birth of Christ, which soon after will be the death of Christ (who died for us all), which implies salvation for mankind. Strangely enough, the poet (and the magus) closes the poem with the word</li> </ul> <p>Death → Death of Christ meaning salvation for us all is worth it. It is not a sad conclusion, but a happy one, because it implies the regeneration, the new</p>

Preview from Notesale.co.uk  
Page 23 of 24