

Murdering of innocents

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Chapter Two begins with the introduction of Thomas Gradgrind, " a man of realitiesSfacts and calculations. " He always introduces himself as Mr. Gradgrind and spends his time in constant cogitation. He is the Speaker, previously unnamed and he now takes it as his duty to educate the children (" little pitchers before him"). He identifies a student, called Girl number twenty, who replies that her name is Sissy Jupe. Gradgrind corrects her that her name is Cecilia regardless of what her father calls her. Jupe's father is involved in a horse-riding circus and this is not respectable<in Gradgrind's opinion.

He advises Cecilia to refer to her father as a " farrier" (the person who shoes a horse) or perhaps, a " veterinary surgeon. " The lesson continues with Gradgrind's command: " Give me your definition of a horse. " While Girl number twenty knows what a horse is, she is unable to define one. Another child in the class, a boy called Bitzer, easily defines the animal by means of biological classifications (quadruped, graminivorous, etc.). After this, the third gentleman steps forward. He is a government officer as well as a famous boxer and he is known for his alert belligerence.

His job is to remove " fancy" and " imagination" from the minds of the children. They learn that it is nonsense to decorate a room with representations of horses because horses do not walk up and down the sides of rooms in reality. Sissy Jupe is a slow learner, among the group of stragglers who admit that they would dare to carpet a room with representations of flowers because she is " fond" of them. Sissy is taught that she must not " fancy" and that she is " to be in all things regulated and governed by fact. " After the gentleman finishes his speech, the

schoolteacher, Mr. M'Choakumchild, begins his instruction. He has been trained in a schoolteacher-factory and has been conditioned to be dry, inflexible and uninspiring<but full of hard facts.

His primary job in these preparatory lessons is to find "Fancy" in the minds of the children and eradicate it. Analysis: "Murdering the Innocents" replaces the suspense of the previous chapter by establishing names and identities for the previously anonymous social roles that were presented earlier. As is to be expected from Dickens, the names of the characters are emblematic of their personality; usually, Dickens' characters can be described as innocent, villainous or unaware of the moral dilemmas of the story that surrounds them. The characters' names are almost always an immediate indication of where the character fits on Dickens' moral spectrum. Thomas Gradgrind, "a man of realities" is a hard educator who grinds his students through a factory-like process, hoping to produce graduates (grads). Additionally, Gradgrind is a "doubting Thomas"<much like the Biblical apostle who resisted belief in the resurrection, this Thomas urges that students depend exclusively upon the evidence in sight. He dismisses faith, fancy, belief, emotion and trust at once.

Mr. M'Choakumchild is plainly villainous and he resembles the sort of fantastic ogres he'd prefer students took no stock in. Cecilia (Sissy) Jupe is unlike the other characters in almost every possible way. While there are other female students, she is the only female identified thus far in the novel. Unlike the boy "Bitzer" (who has the name of a horse), Sissy has a nickname and at least in this chapter, she is the lone embodiment of "fancy" at the same time that she is the single female presented as a contrast to the row of <https://assignbuster.com/murdering-of-innocents/>

hardened mathematical men. Her character is, of course, a romanticized figure.

Despite the political critique of Dickens' simplification and over-idealization of females and children (and girls, especially), Cecilia's character does have some depth that allows her development later in the novel. Her last name, "Jupe," comes from the French word for "skirts" and her first name, Cecilia, represents the sainted patroness of music. Especially as she is a member of a traveling circus, we can expect Cecilia to represent "Art" and "Fancy" in contrast to M'Choakumchild, one of 141 schoolmasters who "had been lately turned at the same time, in the same factory, on the same principles, like so many pianoforte legs. Besides the allusion to St. Cecilia, Dickens alludes to Morgiana, a character in the classic story "

Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" <one of the Arabian Nights tales. The reader should always note the irony in Dickens' allusions: while Dickens' characters argue against fanciful literature, Dickens' is relying upon it to compose his story. In this case, Dickens' simile presents M'Choakumchild's search for "the robber Fancy" in terms of Morgiana's searching for (and hiding of) the thieves in "Ali Baba. The metaphor of the children as eager "vessels" is made explicit when the "vessels" before M'Choakumchild become the "jars" before Morgiana. And the motif of robbers and villains is finalized when we remember that Ali Baba and the forty thieves were more hero than criminal. M'Choakumchild is labeled "gentleman" but his intention to seek and destroy "the robber Fancy lurking within" makes "the robber Fancy" (childish imagination) a more noble personification. Instead, the teachers are the ones who seem criminal.

The most important allusion of the chapter is the title: " Murdering the Innocents. " The reader should expect Dickens work to be full of Biblical and Christian allusions as he is writing to a largely sentimental popular audience. While the reference may be more inaccessible, erudite or unrecognizable for modern young readers, Dickens' 1854 British audience immediately saw the reference to King Herod. Soon after the birth of Christ, Herod fears for his throne and has all of the male babies in Bethlehem executed (in the hopes of murdering the Christ child).

In literary circles, the phrase " murder of the innocents" is exclusively used to describe this Biblical story. While the students are not literally danger (M'Choakumchild), their childish imagination has been targeted for annihilation. This completes the archetype of youth vs. age, and foreshadows that whoever is being targeted and singled out (Cecilia Jupe and her imagination) will ultimately escape this tyrant, but other innocents will be less fortunate (Bitzer). But we might expect as much from the same author who had written A Christmas Carol a decade before.

The major theme of the chapter can be easily inferred from Dickens' description of Cecilia in the classroom. The " horses" and carpeted " flowers" are all double symbols of her femininity and youth, but most important, Cecilia represents Art in opposition to mechanization. Dickens is not arguing against education, science or progress. He is arguing against a mode of factory-style, mind-numbing, grad-grinding production that takes the fun out of life. But even worse than the loss of " fun" or " leisure," Dickens is arguing that art requires an inquisitive and desiring mind.

Especially as Dickens is known to have read and enjoyed Arabian Nights in his youth, we can see a bit of autobiography in his tender treatment of Cecilia. Perhaps if he had come under a Mr. M'Choakumchild, he would have proved incapable of becoming an artist. The life of modern mankind is presented very negatively and ignorantly by Matthew Arnold in the poem Dover Beach by the fact that religious faith evanesce with the Industrial Revolution. Arnold creates the image of the dark future for the people without unwavering faith or religion.

Modern men are bastardised with the thought that new the Industrial Revolution will give them advantage over nature. This thought of gaining superiority made humans arrogant by which this appearance is broken by the reality of nature's dominance. People also seem ignorant with the wishful thought. These pebbles which ' the waves draw back, and fling' are completely powerless and are thrown around by the waves that move these " pebbles" at ease. Arnold uses pebbles as a metaphor for humans to show the inferiority in comparison to nature.

The ignorance of humans is emphasised by the historical allusion to Peloponnesian War. In the dark, soldiers could not differentiate between their own army and the opponents; and so they killed their own soldiers. This is used by the poet to show the stupidity of modern man throwing away the religion which was everything to people before the Industrial Revolution; something to believe and rely on when people prayed. However, this old belief is thrown away and Arnold sees it as a very naive decision. The Industrial Revolution gave the source of arrogance and confidence which took place among the Western countries.

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This revolution was revolutionary itself; humans could mass produce, with improved quality, and at ease. These machineries became the limbs of human society. What came with the industrial revolution was the idea of realism. People could nearly produce goods to near-original standards, all thanks to improved technologies and science, and hence began to doubt the existence of God and supernatural beings. Realism contrasts the theology which is all about belief without questioning that God exists; and people believed it before the times of the machineries. It gave people hope and modesty under the mighty existence of God.

However both hope and modesty disappeared with the Industrial Revolution which Arnold laments for. Bitterness is suggested when Arnold exclaims ' Ah, love' to show that in this changing world, one can only rely on the partner, and be trustful and true. Sarcasm is used to describe the modern world as a ' land of dreams' as there is no more hope for the world, as there is no more faith. As the poem proceeds, the transition of mood is noticeable as the grief of the loss of faith extends to a sense of resignation towards the end and having a sarcastic, sour approach to the issue. The ' tremulous cadence slow' helps to convey the gradual process of the wane of doctrine which adds to the idea that the change of people's lives is almost unnoticeable. This gradual process hurts Arnold because people are caught unaware of the changes taking place and so do not think it is particularly wrong and sinful. Arnold presents his sorrow with the historical allusion to Sophocles who, was a Greek playwright, had heard the sound of waves crashing as the ' eternal note of sadness'.

The 'sadness' of the mankind turning away from religious beliefs is a parallel to the 'melancholy... withdrawing roar...retreating' of the waves. Before the development of science and technology, people had truly believed in the religion and thought that they were in total control of god. The metaphor 'Sea of Faith' which presents the religious faith people have, used to be 'full and round Earth's shore' but now is 'retreating... down the vast edges' which shows the decreasing religious beliefs.

Arnold points out that, without faith, humans are 'naked' and have no protection and defence which reflects the vulnerability of man and their lives. With carefully chosen words, Arnold presents the uncertainty of the future of humans. The new industrialised world seems "so various, so beautiful, so new" but it is again a mere appearance. The reality is that this mechanic, stiff world will have "neither joy, nor love, nor light" because this mechanics cannot feel love, hence no joy, and no vision as humans need love and the warm characteristics of humanity.

It is thus deducible that the future will have no "certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain" which are the essentialities of humans. Humans can only survive the harsh world when everybody believes and trusts each other, and this will be broken with the introduction of industrialisation. This change of the world will bring "confused alarms on struggle and flight" which creates an imagery of a "darkling plain"; a dark vision for humans. Furthermore, the "turbid" ebb and flow shows the cloudy, uncertain future of 'ebb and flow' which is the repetitive cycles of nature.

Can humans only survive when they make harmony with the nature, and to go against the natural cycles can only mean extinction of humans. The ‘cliffs’ of England ‘gleams’ and ‘glimmers’; gleams and glimmers have a sense of shakiness, precariousness and unknown which echoes the uncertain modern man. Also the alliteration of ‘g’ and ‘m’ creates a stuttering tone which adds to the idea of uncertainty. This imagery portrays the withering away of cliffs as a decline of religious beliefs and whatsmore, deterioration of the Earth itself as humans exploit resources out of the Earth which the modern development enabled men to do.

The flaws of modernism and realism are expressed in this poem. The flow of the poem is cut off by uses of caesura which is a parallel to the imperfect modern world. Arnold gives a hint that modernization of the world will have some flaws which will inevitably bring loss of faith and result in loss of equilibrium. In science, there is no hope; everything is measured out and exact. Hence in the modern world reality there can be no hope as it looks vain. Again, Arnold sympathises with the loss of hope in reality.

In a different sense, the calm, naturalistic description of a beach at night in the first stanza is the appearance which contrasts to the reality that is sad, unhopeful, ‘retreating’ and ‘tremulous’. Human beings are inferior over nature and the spiritual beliefs as to an extent that people cannot control anything. The abandonment of the doctrine of religion with the help of the Industrial Revolution is only a vain act against the power overwhelming nature. Religion and faith should remain in humanity and ignoring it should result in the uncertainty and vulnerability of modern man.