Two Poems for T. Study Guide

Two Poems for T. by Cesare Pavese

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

"Two Poems for T." was written in Italian poet Cesare Pavese's notebook in 1946 and not published until after his death. It is assumed that the T. of the title was a woman with whom Pavese had an affair several months earlier. Although his diaries contain little about the person who scholars think was T., it is clear from the poem that she was going through a difficult period in her life and that the poet is trying to offer her some greater perspective. The poem itself provides an excellent example of the kind of advice a fatalistic intellectual poet might offer to a distraught young person. It also provides readers with a good example of Pavese's technical skill.

Cesare Pavese is considered one of Italy's greatest twentieth-century writers. He is celebrated for his novels more than his poetry, but he was prolific in almost every aspect of literature: fiction, poetry, essays, and translation. He is highly regarded for his Italian translations of American literature, including works by Hawthorne and Melville, which he penned during Italy's fascist period, when the government tightly controlled what people could read. A generation of French intellectuals look to Pavese with a debt of gratitude for these translations, along with admiration for Pavese's own creative works.

"Two Poems for T." is available in the collection *Disaffections: Complete Poems, 1930—1950*, translated by Geoffrey Brock.

Author Biography

Cesare Pavese was born September 9, 1908, in Santo Stefano Belbo, Italy, a southern town where his family spent summer vacations. The family home was in Turin, in northern Italy. His father, Eugenio Pavese, worked for the court system. When Pavese was six, his father died of a brain tumor. His mother was a cold and distant woman, and Pavese grew up accustomed to spending time by himself and keeping himself amused.

Pavese started writing poetry while studying at the lyceum, or senior high school, in Turin, and had a few works published before he graduated. It was there that Pavese met Augusto Monti, a teacher who encouraged his writing and influenced his antifascist political stance. At the University of Turin, Pavese studied American literature and later became an important translator of seminal American works, introducing them to the Italian reading public. The thesis he wrote upon graduating in 1930 was on Walt Whitman.

After university, Pavese began a versatile career in letters, publishing criticism, poetry, fiction, and translations in magazines. He taught at the Liceo Massimo d'Azeglio in Turin and also briefly at a night school for adults. His 1932 translation of Melville's *Moby Dick*, which was one of his favorite American novels, was greatly influential at a time when Italian audiences were seldom exposed to American literature.

In 1935 Pavese became romantically involved with Tina Pizzardo, a communist. He agreed to allow letters to her to be mailed to his address, and as a result, the fascist government, which outlawed communism, had him arrested. Pavese was sent to the small town of Brandaleone, in the far south of Italy, and lived there until 1936 under police supervision. The day before Pavese returned to Turin, Pizzardo married another man.

In 1936 Pavese published his first collection of poems, *Lavorare stanca* (translated in 1976 as *Hard Labor*). He then went to work with Giulio Einaudi, a childhood friend who had opened a publishing house. For the rest of his life, Pavese's Italian publisher was Giulio Einaudi Editore. Pavese worked in other capacities for Einaudi as well. Although he continued to write, Pavese published nothing for several years because of pressures from the fascist government censors. During this non-publishing period, he kept active by bringing translations of American writers to Italy. He published two novels between 1941 and 1942, and upon Mussolini's demise and the end of World War II, he began publishing prolifically. His masterpiece is considered to be *Dialoghi con Leuco* (1947; translated in 1965 as *Dialogues with Leuco*).

In 1949 he began a love affair with Constance Dowling, an American actress. He was one of the most important writers in Italy at the time, and when she broke up with him he was devastated. In May 1950 he was awarded Italy's most coveted literary prize, the *Premio Strega*. On August 27, 1950, at age forty-one, Pavese was found dead from an overdose of sleeping pills. He noted in his diary that his failed romance had convinced him he would never find true love.

Plot Summary

Lines 1—2

The first line of "Two Poems for T." begins with an unusual perspective: the "you" of the poem, the mysterious person known as T., has been observed by the plants that grow in the lake. Readers assume T. has been swimming in the lake, since many lake plants are beneath the water's surface. Using this unusual point of view, Pavese is able to accomplish two things at once. He is able to say something about the character of T., who is the type of person who would swim in a lake in the morning, while projecting his feelings about her onto nature, which, the poem implies, watched her with interest.

Lines 3—5

The natural setting of T.'s swim is further explained in these lines. It must be a rural setting, with goats around, and a difficult climate, since the poet mentions stones but not grass or trees or any other foliage. The sweat that is referred to in line 3 is presumably the sweat T. has generated through hard labor. It dissipates, just as the stones and goats are left behind, when she enters the lake, where the plants will continue observing her once she breaks the surface.

Having catalogued various elements that surround the lake, the poet tells readers in line 4 that these elements are timeless. There will always be goats there and stones and strenuous work. When Pavese says they "exist outside of days," he is pointing out how irrelevant the measurement of time is to these things. Time is an idea that humans have created to give a context to a situation like this one, but the scene that is set here would exist even without human consciousness of it. Specifying "the water of the lake" in line 5 is important because the stones, goat, and sweat are all part of T.'s difficult life, but the water that surrounds her, taking her in and cleansing her of the others, is also there forever.

Lines 6—7

"Pain and clamor" refer to events the poem does not specify, but which are related in mood to the stones, sweat, and goats. They are strong words, indicating that the person called T. has suffered recently. Drawing attention to the lake's unchanging character, its unawareness of human trauma, restates the point that the poet has already made about nature being too large to take note of human concerns.

Lines 8—9

The parallel structure of these two lines turns "morning" and "anguish" into related concepts. Usually morning has positive associations, implying hope and the start of a

new day. By relating it to anguish, the poem turns expectations upside down. There is also an ominous implication that early anguish is just the start of things to come, like morning is the start of a new day. The poem's speaker reassures the reader the thing that unites anguish and morning is not that they both are beginnings, but that they both pass by: a reassurance that no agony is worth much worry.

Lines 10—11

The hope that the poem offers in line 9 that anguish will pass is dampened in lines 10 and 11, with the observation that there will be other sources of agony to replace it. T.'s future holds more work, more hard and unyielding nature like the stones, and more dumb animals like goats. All of these items will bother her, causing just as much anguish as that she has experienced this particular morning. The bite will be deeply felt, the speaker tells her, as if it were carried in her blood.

Lines 12—13

Several times, the speaker has threatened the poem's subject with the fear that the things which disturb her will continue forever, or will at least follow each other in an endless succession, each as disturbing as the last. However, in lines 12 and 13 the speaker assures T. that the anguish will in fact end someday. At first, it might seem like a contradiction to claim that other stones and sweat and goats will always be taking the place of earlier ones and yet also to claim that this cycle will end, but in line 13 the speaker offers an explanation: T., he says, will find something that will allow her to see things differently. It will not be a discovery but a "rediscovery," indicating the thing which will make all of the terrible things bearable is something she knew once before, but has forgotten.

Lines 14—16

The poem projects ahead to a time when all of the circumstances will be the same as they are now, but T. will be "beyond the clamor." Since line 7 mentioned the clamor that characterizes her existence, then it is clearly necessary for her to get beyond it if she is to lead a peaceful and happy life. After her rediscovery, the speaker predicts, she will be able to get beyond it. The first of the two poems ends with the calm assurance that, though the world will never change, T. will, and her new outlook will make the troubles of the world irrelevant.

Line 17

The second poem in this sequence is linked to the first with the word "also," although there is no other indicator, except the title, that these two poems have any relation to one another. This first line tells readers that the second poem will address its subject in the more traditional format of a love poem.

Lines 18—19

Although the first line of this poem hints at the higher significance that is usually associated with a love poem, the poet wastes no time in bringing the situation back to a realistic perspective. T., the person being addressed, is made from "blood," an indication of basic human biology, and "earth," which serves as a reminder of the base, physical truth of being human. If love puts people above their physical nature, the poet makes sure T. will not forget that the physical nature still exists.

Line 19 makes a cryptic mention of "the others." This reference could be to other lovers the poet has had, but in this context it probably means the other people who live where T. lives, and who cope with similar circumstances. If "blood and earth" is meant to identify T.'s physical nature, then this reference is included to show her social position.

Lines 20—21

These lines, written in plain, direct language, show that the subject of the poem is not an adventuresome type. She stays close to home, indicating a fear of the world that lies beyond her comfortable barriers. These lines also help identify the speaker's place in relation to her: he has to draw conclusions about her personality from the way she walks, implying that he has no more concrete evidence with which to work. Whether the speaker knows her personally or not, he is telling her what her body conveys to others.

Lines 22—24

These three lines are about T.'s silence. The poem describes her anticipation, waiting for something, watching for it. The problem with her waiting is that she is not aware, so she will not see the thing that she is waiting for when it happens. In light of the first line of this second poem, it is safe to assume that the thing she is waiting for is love.

For a second time in this poem, the poet calls his subject "earth," in line 23. In this case, the reference to the way she relates to the natural world implies she is closer to the things of nature than to humans. She is unable to communicate what she knows or wants or what is bothering her. When she suffers, she holds it in, so that others do not know exactly what is on her mind.

Lines 25—26

The actions ascribed to T. here are not ones usually associated with a cultured individual. "Bursts" and "lapses" indicate to readers that T. does speak, but in wrong proportions: too much and too quickly sometimes, and too little at other times. Saying that she has "words," without any other description of what these words might be or what they are regarding, implies she does not use her words in any clever or

memorable way, but is just barely competent with them. Her words exist, but they are almost meaningless.

Lines 27—28

In the end, the poem summarizes the aspects of T. that have been mentioned already. She performs simple tasks, such as walking, and she keeps quietly to herself, waiting. While the idea of her being "earth" has already been mentioned twice, the poem returns to using "blood" as a metaphor for the physical aspect of humanity, and joins this with the spiritual aspect by saying that T's blood and love are the same thing. This poem, which has stressed the simplicity of its subject's existence, ends with two simple, unpoetic, anti-climactic words: "that's all."

Themes

Epiphany

In the thirteenth line of the poem, Pavese says, "you'll rediscover something." The poem does not identify what T. is supposed to discover, but readers can tell that it will be a revelation that will change T.'s life. While she is described as being a part of the clamor earlier in the poem, in line 7 the speaker says that after this revelation she will be "beyond the clamor."

An epiphany is a moment when a character comes to a sudden understanding of the meaning or essence of things. In this case, the poet tells readers that the character being addressed, "you," will have an epiphany, but he does not go into any further detail about what will cause this epiphany, or why, or exactly what will be learned from it. The point of the epiphany, in this case, is to instill hope in the person who is being addressed. The poet cannot identify just what it is that is going to make T.'s life better, but he does express his confidence that something will, and that the change will be instantaneous. This hope for sudden revelation can help to make the current suffering bearable.

Language and Meaning

In the second poem of this sequence, much is made of the subject's inability to communicate clearly. "You are earth," the speaker says in lines 23 and 24," that aches and keeps silent." Just a few lines later the speaker states, somewhat blandly, "you have words." It is clear that this person T. does not know how to use words effectively, and therefore keeps silent, which gives her the stature of a natural element, much like the stones, the goat, and the sweat mentioned earlier. Like them, T. moves by instinct, if at all. She is more in tune with her own blood than with any other person with whom she might talk.

Yet, even though she does not communicate verbally, the speaker of the poem understands her. He knows enough to predict the epiphany she will have one day. He knows about her love, without her having to profess it. He sees in her motions that she is waiting and that she does not even know what she is waiting for. In words, Pavese has explored a world in which a person who does not use words well lives and communicates with her environment. The precise use of language in the poem indicates a great difference between the speaker, who is a master of language, and the subject, who hardly uses language at all, yet they manage to communicate with each other on a level that goes beyond language.

Love

In this poem, "love" is not a thing people have or fall into or are captured by. Love is claimed to be the essence of T. Immediately after saying that T. will be alone on the lake, closing out the first poem, the second poem begins, "you are also love." With no one else around, it is clear the poet is not referring to romantic love, which is so often the subject of poetry. The poet goes on to give characteristics of this person who embodies love: she waits, silently watching, for something to come to her. With no other person involved, readers can assume that the quality of her love stems from what she projects to the world outside, and not what she takes from it or hopes to take.

The last sentence of the poem states that this person's blood *is* love. This cryptic message can be taken several ways, but the most obvious would be that love is more than the greatest thing in her mind, it is a necessary component of her life. This idea is fortified with the brief note, "that's all," that ends the poem. Although the concept of love in this poem is complex, Pavese insists it is really not that complex at all, but is in fact relatively simple. The connection between love and blood, love and existence, is a new one, but the poem insists on it as if it were obvious and there were nothing to doubt about it.

Style

Apostrophe

Unlike many poems written in the second person, which might conceivably be addressed to the person referred to as "you," "Two Poems for T." does not seem like it is really written to be spoken to its subject. T. is described as being distant and cautious, a person of action, close to the earth. One of the poem's main points is that T. is a simple country person who does not use words well.

A poem that is spoken to a person who will not hear it or to an inanimate object or an animal is called an "apostrophe." Often such poems are used to beg for grace from gods, or to show aspects of a natural object, such as a bird, by speaking to it as if it were human. Here, T. is treated like an object of nature that the poet views from afar. She is described in the poem, but she is also separated from humanity. The final line, in particular, reduces her to "love" alone□the kind of summary that can usually be given for a thing, not a person.

Poetic Sequence

This poem incorporates several different styles at once. It calls itself two poems, and as such is a poetic sequence. Poets use sequences to return to a subject time after time, studying it from different angles. Some poetic sequences run the length of entire books, although it is possible for two poems to constitute a sequence.

On the other hand, the very fact that this piece is printed under one title indicates that it is one poem and that the designation "two poems" from the title is just an artistic ruse to urge readers to look at the differences between the two parts, even while they know the parts add up to a whole. Therefore, accepting its wholeness, the two parts are not really separate poems at all, but are instead stanzas of the same poem. A stanza is a break in a poem, usually occurring at regular intervals. For instance, many poems are written in quatrains, or four-line stanzas. However, there is no rule for how long a stanza should be, and no rule that says that the stanzas of a poem should be the same length. The two stanzas in "Two Poems for T." have similar patterns in the length and language of their lines, and they are both about the same person, which is a fact the reader knows only because the title says it is so. The differences between these two stanzas drive readers to think more carefully about the poem, in order to determine why the author thinks these two different works should be considered one.

Historical Context

Cesare Pavese lived and suffered under the fascist government that ruled Italy from 1922 until the end of World War II. Fascism was an ultra-nationalist movement that arose early in the twentieth century as a response to Marxism. Marxism predicted that the working class would one day rise up in social warfare, leading to the primacy of the individual and the eventual demise of government. On the other hand, fascism presented itself as a system dependant upon government to preserve the unity of the state.

In Italy, fascism was closely linked to the political rise of one man, Benito Mussolini. Mussolini started his career as a socialist but abandoned socialism in 1914, during World War I, because he foresaw the economic problems that the war would cause that would make life more difficult for the workers. When the war ended, Mussolini started several fascist parties, but he was hated by the socialists he had rejected and his intended audience eyed him with suspicion. In 1921 citizens were disturbed by Italy's economic problems and the social violence (much of it caused by fascists) that caused rioting in the streets. Fascist candidates swept into office, with Mussolini as their leader. The following year, Mussolini led a takeover of the government, establishing himself as Italy's dictator.

It was the fascist belief, as laid out in Mussolini's book *The Fascist Doctrine*, that all aspects of society could and should be controlled by the government, in order to control the natural human tendency toward chaos. The years of fascist control were difficult ones for artists in Italy. The totalitarian government controlled what was printed and not printed, censoring works deemed dangerous to the Italian way of life, which were actually just dangerous to the government's authority. Many writers, like Pavese, stopped working during these years, for fear of having their works interpreted as subversive and thereby facing jail time, or worse.

In 1936 Mussolini made a pact with Adolph Hitler, then chancellor of Germany. Germany was beginning its push toward world domination, which would lead to World War II. Italy, however, was a weak country under the fascist regime. When the war began in 1941, Mussolini sent troops to fight beside Germany in Europe and Africa, but the Italian troops were poorly equipped and armed and were frequently defeated. Mussolini's alliance with Hitler, with which he had hoped to create a greater power base as Italy gained from the nations that it conquered and controlled, ended up eroding his popular support. Mussolini began programs, like those in Nazi Germany, to suppress and eventually exterminate Jews in Italy, but the Italian people resented the violence that Mussolini brought to their home towns. This fact, in addition to the many military losses, led Mussolini to lose control of the country in 1943, the year that Italian forces surrendered to the Allies. King Victor Emmanuel called for Mussolini and most high-ranking fascists to resign, and a new government was established with broader democratic principles. Mussolini was executed by a military tribunal in 1945. In 1946, the year that Pavese wrote this poem, Victor Emmanuel abdicated his throne; the

people of Italy, in a referendum, passed a new constitution establishing the country as a republic.

Critical Overview

When his career is taken into perspective as a whole, Cesare Pavese's poetry has been accepted as the work of a gifted author, but it is often neglected by readers in favor of his fiction. His fiction, which was plain and cold, seemed more appropriate for the ideas he put forth, thus resonating with audiences more than his poetry. At the time when his novels were first translated into English and published in America, Pavese's poetry was still known only in Italy. His book of poems *Hard Labor*, for instance, first published in Italy in 1943, did not appear in an American edition until 1976. Many of his important poetic works, such as "Two Poems for T.," were not available in English until the 2002 collection *Disaffections*.

Another aspect that has clouded judgment of Pavese's poetry is the tendency by many critics to cling to the connection between the author's life and his work. Because of the vagaries of his personality, binding his life to his work often ends with the work suffering. As Áine O'Healy states in the conclusion of *Cesare Pavese*, "Pavese's artistic and intellectual pursuits became not a mere temporary repository for existential tensions, but threatened to become a substitute for life itself. It has been on this point that his critics have been most severe." Still, Pavese is today considered one of the greatest Italian writers of the twentieth century and the only Italian poet from the fascist era who is studied in depth.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Kelly is an instructor of creative writing and literature at two colleges in Illinois. In this essay, Kelly examines why it can be considered artistically appropriate that T., who is hardly given individual characteristics in the poem, is referred to in the title at all.

"Two Poems for T." is one of Cesare Pavese's later works, scribbled in a notebook in 1946 and unpublished until after his suicide in 1950. The poem could hardly be more cryptic, from the fact that this one poem is identified as two, to the references to specific objects (such as "goats") that seem to identify a particular, unidentified setting, to the fact that the "you" of the poem is identified less by social relationship than by philosophical situation. There is so much left unsaid in this poem that critics tend to look outside its lines, to the life of the poet himself, when trying to understand it. This should come as no surprise: Pavese was an intensely personal poet, whose literary reputation was based on other activities, namely his fiction and his fascination with American authors. His poetry actively defied easy comprehension. William Arrowsmith, whose translation of *Hard Labor* was the first collection of Pavese's poems available to American audiences, noted in his introduction to the book that, for Pavese, poetry was a struggle against the old forms, which the fascist government of Italy had co-opted into a political tool of its own. Arrowsmith explains Pavese's poetry as a search for the spiritual meaning in the small things in life□the obscure, overlooked objects that are always around but never thought of as objects of poetry. He tells readers that, for Pavese, "the poet had to stand open to the world and to others, to make his poetry *reveal* . . . the spiritual, mythical 'presence' which things do not 'express' but are."

The assumption, then, that facts from Pavese's life might lead to a richer understanding of why he constructed this poem in this way is not a very strong one, but, in trying to untangle the riddle of something as shadowy as "Two Poems for T." it is best to grasp at any clues that are available. In a lengthy article published in 1997 in the journal *American Poetry Review*, Alan Williamson noted that the novelist Italo Calvino had drawn the conclusion that T. of the poem was a woman referred to in Pavese's journal as "Ter.," with whom Pavese had conducted a brief affair but had not loved with the operatic breadth of many of his other heart-crushing affairs. Assuming that Calvino is correct□which, given his reputation as a writer and scholar, is a pretty safe assumption□this puts readers only slightly closer to the heart of the poem. Knowing that T. was a lover at one time brings shades of understanding to the poem, especially to the second stanza, which is about love. Knowing that their love affair was just tepid gives readers food for thought in interpreting the "you are love" idea. Still, this new perspective only changes one's interpretation slightly. Setting aside information about Ter., this poem is about the human condition and raises specific imagery that tantalizes readers because it seems that it should mean something, and it probably does, to the writer. What the knowledge of this past lover adds to the interpretation is measurable, but it still does not provide the poem with any clear point.

Suppose there was a Ter. and, further, suppose that person was on Pavese's mind the entire time that he was working on this poem: the poem is still too tightly woven to make

the presence of an outside person, an intruder from the real world, significant. This poem is not about a person, strictly, but rather about humanity. To that end, it matters very little if the person described is a lover, an acquaintance, or someone the poet has known all his life.

Like any work of art, "Two Poems for T." is partly about the artist who created it. It shows the kind of fear and fascination with the details of life in the country that is common of a city dweller like Pavese, and it shows his characteristic mix of cold-blooded realism with the awareness that the tangible objects of the world mean something that cannot be verbalized. Even more relevant than the identity of T. is the brief biographical fact that, sentenced for treason, Pavese was sent into exile from Turin, the town where he had lived all of his life, to a remote Mediterranean village. The confluence of being displaced against his will, having his life disrupted, and serving his sentence in relative freedom in a free and sunny climate has more to do with this poem than the name of the person who was on his mind at the time.

There would be no interest in the actual identity of the "you" of the poem at all if she had not been named in the title. Doing so represents an interesting choice on the poet's part. Even if it was just an off-the-cuff scribbling in his notebook, it still indicates a desire to connect the person to the poem. Though the connection is not necessary in a literary sense, there must have been some reason why Pavese wanted it made.

According to Arrowsmith, in the quote above, it was Pavese's intention to make circumstances reveal themselves, rather than having to explain them. In wondering why this title works for this particular poem, readers must ask themselves just what it is that is supposed to be revealed. The two poems melded together here show very little in the way of character of either the speaker or the "you." The first "poem," about sweat and blood and goats, has the speaker observing the other, but all that readers are told is that the other is swimming in a lake. This stanza goes on to say that the "you" will someday "rediscover" something that will make the misery of life better, but this is a generalized prediction that any person could make to any other with a good chance of being close to right. The second "poem" is a little more specific□does one not need to know a person, readers must ask, if they are going to say to that person, "You are love?" Still, this poem is impersonal in that it seems to be telling the other things about her that she does not know, and would quite possibly not recognize. If two people do not have the same view of the situation, then it is not really a shared situation. The character of T. as it is described here might be anyone, as far as she is concerned. Pavese describes T. as a true outside observer would, as "one who waits and does not see" and "the earth that aches and keeps silent." From the very fact that he feels that he has to offer these assessments at all, it is clear that she would not recognize herself in them: they are not the warm compliments of lovers, but instead have the unpleasant clang of a doctor's diagnosis. The subject herself would need the title to see that this is supposed to be she.

In combining this title with this poem, Pavese shows his subtle poetic genius. The poem's subject might not know about whom he is talking, and its readers might not know, but the one thing that anchors his philosophical musings is that the poet makes it

clear that he knows. It is only when readers can believe that there is an individual subject and that this poem is not written with the intent of illustrating the general human condition, that the poem can work. There are hints of the particular setting within the poem, but giving the other person a name (or, rather, an initial, indicating that the full name has been hidden in order to preserve her identity) makes readers back off asking more. We understand that this is a private matter and are therefore much more willing to accept the lack of details.

Hinting in the title of the poem that the person described is a real person is bound to whet a reader's curiosity, especially when the poem is so scarce of details that the subject's identity might reasonably be expected to provide critical information. In the case of "Two Poems for T.," knowing who T. probably was ends up being only mildly interesting. The poem can be understood without knowing, though the information from Pavese's journal does add a little coloring to any interpretation. The important thing is that it was dedicated at all, so that readers know that there is a level of reality beyond what appears in this poem. Most people are used to experiencing the lives of others in glimpses, familiar with only a fraction of the events that form another person's mind, and in cases of other people's personal relationships, it is almost always the case that we just will never know the whole story.

Source: David Kelly, Critical Essay on "Two Poems for T.," in *Poetry for Students*, Gale, 2004.

Topics for Further Study

Find two poems written by the same poet or by different poets that you think could be joined together as one. Explain your justification for linking them.

This poem implies that T., the person being addressed, works with goats. Find out what you can about the kind of landscape where goats are tended and prepare a chart showing how that land differs from where you live.

Identify the characteristics that make this poem uniquely Italian. Explain how it would have been different if it had been written by someone of a separate nationality (of your choosing).

The second stanza emphasizes T.'s silence. Write the response you think T. would make to this explanation of her behavior, either in poetry or in prose.

Compare and Contrast

1946: In the aftermath of World War II, Italy is a ruined country, economically drained and damaged by battles that took place across its landscape.

Today: Italy has enjoyed a strong economy that has only recently suffered its first mild recession since the early 1990s.

1946: Italian culture, having been suppressed for decades by the totalitarian rule of the fascist party, flowers and attracts world-wide attention.

Today: Italy has no official state-sponsored censorship. There is concern about the 2001 election of billionaire media baron Silvio Berlusconi to prime minister. Opponents fear that Berlusconi, who controls 90 percent of the country's television stations, might suppress artistic freedom.

1946: Italy is primarily an agricultural society.

Today: Although it still has a strong agricultural aspect, most of Italy's economy today is in industry and communications.

1946: In the wake of the fascist government's fall, organized crime, which has had a strong influence in Italy for most of the twentieth century, flourishes.

Today: Although the Italian economy and government are stable, organized crime is still a powerful force, costing Italian businesses over $60 billion annually in protection money, stolen goods, and security.

What Do I Read Next?

"Two Poems for T." can be found in the collection *Disaffections: Complete Poems, 1930—1950* (2002). This collection provides a broader sampling of Pavese's writing styles and themes.

Four of Pavese's novels—*The Beach*, *The House on the Hill*, *Among Women Only*, and *The Devil in the Hills*—are collected and available in *The Selected Works of Cesare Pavese* (1968).

The standard biography of Pavese is *An Absurd Vice: A Biography of Cesare Pavese* (1983), written by Davide Lajolo and translated by Mario and Mark Pietralunga.

Students interested in Pavese can read a condensed version of his diaries in *The Business of Living: Diaries, 1935—1950* (1980). These selections do not cover all of the important events in his life, but they do give a sense of his personality and complex mind.

Further Study

Pavese, Cesare, *American Literature*, University of California Press, 1970.

Pavese was as well-known for bringing American literature to his Italian audience as he was for his poetry. Students studying his thoughts on Melville, Whitman, James Baldwin, and others will find Pavese's philosophy mapped out in greater detail here than it is in "Two Poems for T."

Signorelli-Pappas, Rita, "Imagining the Author's Gaze: Ancient and Modern Exile Literature in Translation," in *Literary Review*, Vol. 46, No. 4, Summer 2003, pp. 753—58.

This recent article examines a wide range of translation methods, including choices made by Geoffrey Brock in translating Pavese's poetry.

Thompson, Doug, *Cesare Pavese: A Study of the Major Novels and Poems*, Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Thompson's work does not examine "Two Poems for T." but it does give serious consideration to the poet's style and influences.

Williamson, Alan, "Pavese's Late Love Poems," in *American Poetry Review*, Vol. 26, No. 5, September—October 1997, pp. 40—45.

Williamson identifies the inspiration of "Two Poems for T." as a woman referred to in Pavese's notebooks as "Ter.," attributing this discovery to Italian novelist Italo Calvino. In general, this article gives a good sense of the emotional turmoil in Pavese's life when he wrote this poem.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Poetry for Students (PfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, PfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of PfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of PfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in PfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by PfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

PfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Poetry for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the PfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the PfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Poetry for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Poetry for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from PfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Poetry for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from PfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Poetry for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of PfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Poetry for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of PfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Poetry for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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