

## T. S. Eliot's 'Marina': A Critical Analysis

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T.S. Eliot's 'Marina' belongs to the group of poems which have been designated as 'The Ariel Poems' composed during 1927 and 1930. After his conversion to Anglicanism in 1927, Eliot began to write a new kind of poetry which "represented a withdrawal from the outer world and a quest for the inner life under the guidance of Christianity. The present poem, which relates to the theme of paternity, is based on Shakespeare's play 'Pericles, Prince of Tyre'. Marina was the only daughter of Pericles; she was born at sea and was named Marina which means 'of the sea'. Soon Pericles lost her as he was running away from his enemy facing miseries and threats on land and sea. It is in Act V of Shakespeare's play that Pericles realized that the dancer and singer performing before him was none else but his daughter. The dancing girl reminded him of his wife Thaisa, He talked to the girl, and became overjoyed to find that she was his daughter and that her mother had died while giving birth to her. Thus, the play ends in reconciliation. Marina has returned from a shipwreck that was presumed to have taken her life.

Eliot considers Act V of the play to be the most significant one, where reconciliation takes place. When the long lost Marina appears on the deck of the ship before the eyes of Pericles, he is filled with a refreshing sense of wonder and joy. The rediscovery of the daughter suggests his reunion with the lost 'innocence'. This awakens him from a nightmare of doubts and despair. His tone and his words suggest a sense of guilt for having constructed a defective ship, in which his daughter was believed to have lost her life. Marina emerges as the symbol of redemption and not the Christian Savior. She is a symbol of regeneration and re-birth out of death. The incident is so miraculous that it has all the surrealism as well as freshness of a dream and fills the heart of Pericles with ecstasy. A new, rejuvenating realization dawns upon him. In fact, at a deeper level, the poem presents the moment of spiritual reawakening which signifies a phase of transcendence from the limits of worldly life.

The opening two lines in Latin taken from Luscious the Younger Seneca's play, Hercules Furens, form the Epigraph to the poem. These lines express Hercules' sense of dismay and bewilderment when he wakes up from his cursed fit only to realize that he has killed his wife and children. Thus, the epigraph, suggests Hercules' sense of horror at what has happened: "What place is this? What region? What quarter of the world?" In a similar sense, the first stanza of the poem describes the despair and dejection of Pericles with everything in the past, which has bred in his mind the sinister idea about the death of his daughter. Everything reminds him of the death of his wife and daughter. Eliot also utilizes the Epigraph to contrast the tragic awakening of Hercules with the joyful experience of the new life which Marina's reunion with Pericles symbolizes.

In the second stanza, Pericles recalls the injustice and cruelties he has suffered in the mortal world. At the same time, he also reveals his realization as to what various forms of material obsession entail. The image 'dog' is a metaphor of evil. Another image of evil is the 'humming bird feeding on

insects while flying in the sky' shows the cruelties of Pericle's fellow-men who pretend to be sincere but try to stab in the back with a smile. Yet another image is that of a rotten ship built by Pericles and a new ship to be built by Marina. While standing on the sea shore, Pericles gets a vision of divine beauty. Marina becomes a vehicle of grace and a metaphor for the divine mercy. Naturally, her discovery signifies a lease of "renewed life" for the father. She emerges as a symbol of resurrection.

The third and fourth stanza resonate with optimism when, in breath of the pine tree spread all over by the wind, Marina reaches out to the mystery of 'grace dissolved in peace'. The face of Marina appears recognizable to Pericles slowly and gradually. The powerful association of the sea-world with the dream world is sensitively evoked by images and the musical flow of the verse. In Shakespeare's play, Pericles becomes ecstatic and hears the music which is not noticed by others. He believes it to be the music of spheres. In Eliot's poem, the music is that of the 'woodthrush singing through the fog'. The dominant images are the scent of pine, the sound of water at a bow, and of 'whispers' and small laughter." In this way, the happy image of the reclaimed daughter of Pericles is contrasted with the emotional reaction of Hercules containing negative implications.

The poem, written after Eliot's conversion to Christianity, has a deep religious overtone. In the poem, the narrator remembers the storm and the apparent death of his wife, and mourns the loss of his daughter. He views the temporal world as one in which death and decay are inevitable; only God, standing outside time is not subject to the law of decay. While what he wants is to transcend the human world of sorrow and loss in order to experience the ecstasy of the divine world. For that, the best he can do is to renounce the world of power and wealth and follow an ascetic life. This signifies the birth of a new life for him, in particular, his reunion with his daughter, which comes through the divine grace.

Thus, Marina is a poem about spiritual awakening; it suggests a quest for 'innocence' and creativity. The monologue seeks to capture precisely the moment of illumination where the boundaries between the dream and the reality remain blurred. Pericles is not sure which side he belongs to. His experience suggests a phase of transition. As in a dream, he stands on the deck of the vessel approaching the land from whose granite shores come the scent of pine and the song of wood thrush. The images arise out of some recollection of memories as he becomes conscious of his daughter's presence. The images objectify the emotion deep rooted in his mind. They help him transcend the memories of those men associated with the sins of envy, pride, sloth and concupiscence, and with the state of death consequent upon habitual sin. Such men are described in the brief passage, which begins with 'those' and repeats 'Death' at the end of each line. Thus, the old 'self' as well as the old 'ship' which has been battered by the passage of time and the blows of circumstances, and which was not given to any discipline, is now resigned to the child. The experience is so overwhelming that the father remains without the power of speech. This reunion of the old, decayed self with the child, with parted lips and renewed hope for the future, ensures a rejuvenated life for the father. In this way, a new ship will emerge out of the old and rotten one and will sail towards new, firm shores, following the note of the wood thrush through the fog. So, the poem closes on a note of affirmation and ecstasy; the voyager has found a new ship, discovered the right direction and can move forward to a secure anchorage.