

SIGNIFICANCE OF CAL'S MOTHER

How old was Cal when his mother died?
How does Cal feel about Gracie's death even
"now"?
What was Gracie like?

SYMBOLS TO BE FOUND IN *CAL*

abattoir: introduces Northern Ireland as a bloody place
introduces Crilly with a knife
provides a setting of violence and disgust that mirrors the violence and disgust
inherent in the "war".

Other echoes of the abattoir:

- when Cal remembers atrocities committed by Protestants, one of the victims is a butcher "hung up on a meat hook in his own shop".
- the two halves of a hanging carcass
- explosion in the field of cows confronts Cal with the sight of "half a cow- udders, hindquarters with muscles red-raw and still jiggling"
- white panels of their (=the surviving cows) japped all over with blood.
- when he is invited to an Italian meal by Marcella, Cal feel the need to explain to her what happens "when a calf is too big to be born". When he is disappointed by her he **does** tell her: "They cut them up with cheese wire. The vet puts cheese wire inside the cow and cuts them up before they're born. Then they get born in bits."
- The humane killer/captive bolt from the abattoir is actually used by Crilly on Skeffington's behalf to punish the 16 year-old boy who injured Skeffington's father.

Nightmares: Cal's three nightmares can be seen as symbolic element of the novel.

In all three of them, Cal is presented as a helpless individual unable to prevent disaster; in the second nightmare we are also given the image of the blind people who do not see the plight of those in real trouble. On this level the dream points to the political situation in Ulster.

1st chapter: we do not understand the relevance of the "dream girl's" stark terror and subsequent jump through the window onto the railings.

// Marcella

CAL

4th chapter: railway station in **Rome** (Marcella had told him about her visit there); Julius Caesar - Cal's only association with Rome.

Marcella: recognizes him but remains detached; she seems callous as to the fate of the man lying on the tracks

man in a blue boiler-suit: Cal's alter ego? He frantically signals to her to make his plight clear = he is not capable of explaining his plight to Marcella.

The crowd: they are blind; they do not "seem to mind" the blood;
= the others in Ireland who (it seems) do nothing to stop the fighting.

The blood: can be found throughout the novel, beginning in the abattoir.
Notice the repetition of the uncommon verb "jap" in connection with blood.

5th chapter: self-explanatory recurring dream of himself driving and at a critical point turning the wheel and nothing happening (p. 152). His life out of control. . .

Violence:

Cal's personal need for suffering:

Cal's attitude towards religion:

- Never considers NOT going to Mass on Sunday.
- uses sermons to shout out "his own black thoughts"
- finds it difficult to pray.
- cannot go to confession
- flags at the football match automatically remind him of "Papal flags" and of venial and mortal sins