for generations, deemed as consistent rhyme scheme throughout. There are 7 'dark shoals juxtapose ideas about war and death with the more peaceful that the pilot looks down upon. This he combine to create a vivid depiction of the life flashing techniques of the sea. 

Japanese Seafaring Culture – Throughout the poem, Garland uses specific references to ‘fishing boats’ and the ‘green-blue translucent sea’ largely owing to its geographic make-up as a series of islands. Japanese seafaring traditions vary greatly. Many people in the past lived and worked near the sea, as fishing and inter-island trading were key features of Japanese society. This is reflected in the poem with the position that the kamikaze pilot finds himself.

Kamikaze Pilots – During the Second World War, the term ‘Kamikaze’ was used for the pilots who were sent on suicide missions. They were expected to crash their planes into enemy targets, e.g., warships, to sink them and casualties to the enemy, but also killing themselves. The word ‘kamikaze’ translates as ‘divine wind.’ The tradition of facing death rather than capture and defeat was deeply engrained in Japanese culture, mentored pilots could face with loyalty.

Imagery – Garland creates imagery through a range of techniques primarily the use of interesting and specific vocabulary – the ‘huge flag,’ ‘little board and translucent sea’ being prime examples. Garland also utilises powerful colour imagery, noting the ‘blue’ of the ocean, the flashing ‘silver,’ and the ‘dark shoals.’ Each of these details combine to create a vivid depiction of the life-filled scene that the pilot remembers. This helps the reader to empathise with the pilot and the decision that he takes. 

Quote: “at the little fishing boats/ strung out like bunting/ on a green-blue translucent sea

Double Meaning of Words – Garland uses double meanings and metaphors throughout the text to juxtapose ideas about war and death with the more peaceful backdrop of the Japanese fishing scene. For example, the ‘dark shoals of fishes’ could easily represent the flight of Japanese war planes heading towards destruction, whilst ‘silver’ presents ideas of honour and glory for those who die.

Quote: “the dark shoals of fishes/ flashing silver as their bellies/ swivelled towards the sun”

Form/Structure – The poem has a consistent, regular form throughout. There are 7 stanzas, each containing 6 lines. This regular structure could be seen to represent the regimented order of Imperial Japan. However, there is no apparent consistent rhyme scheme, meaning a lack of flow. This may represent the confusing influences in the pilot’s mind.

Further Thought: Line length varies more in stanzas 6 & 7. Does this represent the disorder in the pilot’s later life?

Themes – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

Personal Consequences of War – Rather than focusing upon bloody details or evocative imagery, this poem deals with the lasting effects that war can inflict on people, families, and communities. This poem is not only deeply personal but is a call to action for those around the world.

Courage/ Honour – In the Empirical Japanese context, demonstrating courage and honour for one’s country are deemed as a compulsory responsibility. By seemingly neglecting this, and opting to live, the kamikaze pilot is described as being ‘dead’ to those around him anyway – the only difference is that he brings shame upon his family for generations. The reader is encouraged to consider: Is this what honour/ courage are? Is the pilot treated fairly?

Language/Structural Devices

Enjambment – Garland utilises enjambment to help the reader experience the pilot’s altered mindset whilst on the kamikaze mission. Enjambment is first used in stanza one, to echo the incantations (chants) of loyalty that the pilot repeats to himself as he approaches the battle in the sky. The consectetur reflect that he is not stopping and dwelling on thoughts of death. Enjambment occurs at many points, but particularly in stanza 4, as though the pilot is making himself mind and overtake the incantations, altering his mindset.

Quote: “a shaven head/ full of powerful incantations/ and enough fuel for a one-way/journey into history”

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