***Aunt Helen***

T. S. Eliot’s poems are definitely the least direct out of the collection of poems I’ve read so far. He uses imagery and specific adjectives as his most powerful tools in creating his scenes. At first, I was not sure what to make of Eliot’s poems. There is very little information given to use as a springboard to peel away at the layers of his poems. Aunt Helen is the poem that I was able to understand most, though not for any particular reason other then chance. One of the adjectives Eliot uses to describe Aunt Helen caught my attention in my third read through.

Aunt Helen is, at its most basic level, a story about a woman named Aunt Helen who dies. At first read, the rest of poem did not make any sense to me. Why is heaven quiet? Why is her street corner quiet? After all, the undertaker “was aware that this sort of thing had happened before”. It seemed strange that the death of women would be so moving as to silence the heavens. It seemed strange that the death of a women would be so important as to have the housemaid weeping into the footman’s chest, being held like a child. As I read it over a couple more times, the word “maiden” used to describe Aunt Helen added a new filter in which to read the poem.

If Aunt Helen was a maiden, this implies that she is young. This also implies that she was most likely unmarried. She was carried for and lived in a prime location. From these descriptions in the first lines of *Aunt Helen*, I’m drawn to believe that she lived rather lavishly and was supported by someone else, such as her father. The next lines that speak of the silence in heaven and on her street make me feel as though this death was sudden. The people are shocked and speechless. On the other hand, if it was shocking, then the undertaker’s attitude depicted in the next lines seem almost understanding. Eliot shows this by his actions, with “…the undertaker wiped his feet-“ signaling an end-of-day feeling that bordered on expectant. The undertaker is also one of her servants that must be intelligent and also knows her well. The undertaker’s attitude toward Aunt Helen’s death is contradictory to how most people would feel, as described by Eliot. Aunt Helen is also young, so a sudden death, which is implied by the speechlessness of heaven and earth, should not occur by natural matters. This leads me to believe that Aunt Helen either killed herself or was murdered. I believe it was a suicide due to the lack of anger in the poem and the words of the last line of *Aunt Helen*. It seems as though the housemaid was expecting the death because she was always so careful when taking care of her and she seems more distraught then anyone else about her death.