BRITISH POETRY FROM BLAKE TO HUGHES

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Printed by
LAXMI PUBLICATIONS (P) LTD.
113, Golden House, Daryaganj,
New Delhi-110002
for
Lovely Professional University
Phagwara

SYLLABUS

British Poetry from Blake to Hughes

Objectives:

- To acquaint the learners with the most important poetic texts of the eighteenth century.
- To help the learners to appreciate the poetic imagery.

Sr. No.	Topics
1	William Blake- Introduction of the author and Songs of Innocence:The Lamb, The little black Boy, Songs of Experience (A Poison Tree, The Tyger, The Sick Rose) William Blake- Songs of Experience (A Poison Tree, The Tyger, The Sick Rose), William Wordsworth: Ode on Intimations of Immortality
2	Major Terms (brief introduction to be given): assonance ,ballad ,blank verse , neo-classicism and romanticism ,conceit ,couplet ,elegy ,epic Major Terms (brief introduction to be given): Figure of speech ,heroic couplet ,iambic pentameter ,lyric ,metaphor, simile, metonymy , synecdoche ,meter , ode ,pastoral, personification ,rhyme ,sonnet Major Terms (brief introduction to be given): Negative Capability, Renaissance of Wonder, Hellenism, Supernaturalism, Fancy and imagination, Dramatic Monologue Major Terms (brief introduction to be given): Victorian Compromise, Pre Raphaelite Poetry, Art for Art's sake, Aestheticism, Imagist, War poets, Movement poets, Modernist Poetry
3	John Keats: Ode on a Grecian Urn, Ode to a Nightingale, Ode to Autumn, Robert Browning: Introduction of the poet: Poem: My Last Duchess Robert Browning: The Last Ride Together, Discussion on His philosophy
4	Lord Tennyson: The Lady of Shallot, Ulysses,Mathew Arnold: Dover Beach,W.B.Yeats: Introduction of the author and His poem: A Prayer for my daughter.W. B. Yeats: Second Coming and As an Irish Poet
5	Ted Hughes : Introduction of the Poet and Detailed study of his poem: The Thought Fox Ted Hughes : Thrushes and Hughes as an animal poet T.S.Eliot : The Waste Land (non-detailed):Introduction of the Author and text T.S.Eliot : The Waste Land (non-detailed): Discussion and analysis

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Unit 1: William Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the biography of William Blake
- Discuss briefly the analysis, summary and commentary of songs of Innocence and songs of Experience.

Introduction

Songs of Innocence and Experience is an illustrated collection of poems by William Blake. It appeared in two phases. A few first copies were printed and illuminated by William Blake himself in 1789; five years later he bound these poems with a set of new poems in a volume titled Songs of Innocence and Experience Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul. "Innocence" and "Experience" are definitions of consciousness that rethink Milton's existential-mythic states of "Paradise" and the "Fall." Blake's categories are modes of perception that tend to coordinate with a chronology that would become standard in Romanticism: childhood is a time and a state of protected "innocence," but not immune to the fallen world and its institutions. This world sometimes impinges on childhood itself, and in any event becomes known through "experience," a state of being marked by the loss of childhood vitality, by fear and inhibition, by social and political corruption, and by the manifold

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oppression of Church, State, and the ruling classes. The volume's "Contrary States" are sometimes signaled by patently repeated or contrasted titles: in Innocence, Infant Joy, in Experience, Infant Sorrow; in Innocence, The Lamb, in Experience, The Fly and The Tyger.

Songs of Experience is a poetry collection of 26 poems forming the second part of William Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience. The poems were published in 1794. Some of the poems, such as The Little Boy Lost and The Little Boy Found were moved by Blake to Songs of Innocence, and were frequently moved between the two books. In this collection of poems, Blake contrasts Songs of Innocence, in which he shows how the human spirit blossoms when allowed its own free movement with Songs of Experience, in which he shows how the human spirit withers after it has been suppressed and forced to conform to rules, and doctrines. In fact, Blake was an English Dissenter and actively opposed the doctrines of the Anglican Church, which tells its members to suppress their feelings.

1.1 Introduction to the Author

William Blake is one of the most renowned poets in the history of English literature. Born to the owners of a hosiery shop on Broad Street in the center of London in 1757, William Blake developed into a toddler of extraordinary imagination. While only a young boy (around the age of four), he spoke to his parents of seeing angels playing amongst him, encountering visions of heaven and hell throughout London and the nearby countryside, and spotting God keeping a close eye on him during tasks and chores. It was not long before the young Blake began to stencil out the visions from his imagination, and as an eleven year old, he enlisted in Pars' Drawing School to learn the art of printing and plaster casting.

Soon thereafter, Blake began to apprentice under London artist James Basire, and as a fourteen-year-old, he was assigned to drawing monuments in Westminster Abbey, which led to a lifelong admiration for Gothic art and religious illustration. While working with Basire, Blake befriended contemporary apprentice James Parker. Parker and Blake would later become partners in a jointly owned print shop on Broad Street, right next door to the Blake hosiery shop and household, a partnership that only lasted one year (1784-85).

Task Comment on Blake as a social critic.

One must recall the historical context of Blake's development from a young artist to a poet in his mid-twenties. In 1775, America began a revolution of independence from England, igniting tense controversy in London, and the young artist witnessed an angry society torn apart by liberal sympathizers with the American revolutionaries and conservative loyalists to the colonial empire.

In 1782, William Blake married Catherine Boucher, and one year later, he published his first book of poems, Poetical Sketches, at the encouragement of the Reverend Anthony Stephen Matthew and his wife, owners of a salon which was a frequent drinking spot for the twenty-six year old.

In the mid to late 1780s, two events came into Blake's life that would change his method of expression and alter his artistic voice forever, while setting him up as one of the most unique and most referenced poetic geniuses of the English language. First, he began to read and study the works of Scandinavian poet Swedenborg, a philosophical rebel who refused and refuted the semi-materialistic philosophy that had grown so widespread in the late eighteenth century. Second, he began to draw and write on copper plates before dipping them into a corrosive acid that would allow for his words and images to stand out from the plate itself, ready to be colored and inked for easier printing. William Blake, the plating artist with a revolutionary voice, was born.

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Did u know? In 1789, Blake published Songs of Innocence and The Book of Thel, which displayed the range of his talents, for one was a collection of short and witty rhymed stanzas and the other a lengthy epic "prophetic book." This year also saw the beginning to the French Revolution, which further widened the cleavage in English society.

The next ten years (1790-1800) were arguably the most peaceful and successful times for the Blake couple. It was during this period that Blake completed iconic works like Songs of Experience, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, America: A Prophecy, Europe: A Prophecy, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, The Song of Los, and The Book of Urizen, all of which discernibly demonstrate Blake's support of the Revolution.

As the French Revolution disintegrated into a war for national power and lost sight of its original mission of liberating idealism, Blake began to question his faith in humanity and in the revolutionary spirit. In 1800, the Blakes moved to a cottage in Felpham, on the coast of Sussex, next door to William Hayley, a long-time Blake companion. It was during this time that Blake completed most of the work on Vala, another one of his epic prophecies.

In 1803, William Blake reentered the world of religious doctrine, calling himself a re-born "soldier of Christ" in a letter to a friend. It is then that Blake began his work on his final epic prophecy, Jerusalem. Blake soon returned to London, where a series of events began a downward spiral into wretchedness and despair for William Blake. First, Napoleon crowned himself Emperor of France in 1804, removing any hope for the revolutionary spirit that Blake once promoted. Second, a series of Blake's illustrations were stolen and plagiarized by engraver and publisher Robert Cromek, which outraged Blake and broke him financially. In a final effort for Blake to gain fame and earn the respect from his contemporaries he deserved, he summoned friends Henry Crabb Robinson and Charles Lamb to finance an exhibition of his life works. Unfortunately, few were interested, and the exhibition even caused the well-respected periodical, The Examiner, to denounce the work as nothing more than art of "an unfortunate lunatic."

In Blake's final years of poverty and despair, he completed two of his most famous and respected religious works, Jerusalem and Milton. In 1818, William Blake began to be recognized by a new group of poets and artists for the revolutionary genius that he was. Among one of his highest enthusiasts was John Linnell, who summoned Blake to provide detailed illustrations to both the Book of Job and Dante's Divine Comedy. William Blake died suddenly on August 12, 1827, before either of the works was completed.

1.2 William Blake: Songs of Innocence

1.2.1 The Lamb

Notes "The Lamb" is a poem by William Blake, published in Songs of Innocence in 1789. Like many of Blake's works, the poem is about Christianity.

Like the other Songs of Innocence and Experience, The Lamb was intended to be sung; William Blake's original melody is now lost. It was made into a song by Vaughan Williams. It was also set to music by Sir John Tavener, who explained, "The Lamb came to me fully grown and was written in an afternoon and dedicated to my nephew Simon for his 3rd birthday." American poet Allen Ginsberg set the poem to music, along with several other of Blake's poems.

The Lamb can be compared to a more grandiose Blake poem: The Tyger in Songs of Experience.

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Text

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed,
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee.
He is called by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and He is mild;
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

Poetic Structure

This poem has a simple rhyme scheme : AA BB CC DD AA AA EF GG FE AA

The layout is set up by two stanzas with the refrain: "Little Lamb who made thee?/Dost thou know who made thee?"

In the first stanza, the speaker wonders who the lamb's creator is; the answer lies at the end of the poem. Here we find a physical description of the lamb, seen as a pure and gentle creature. In the second stanza, the lamb is compared with the infant Jesus, as well as between the lamb and the speaker's soul. In the last two lines the speaker identifies the creator: God.

Summary

The poem begins with the question, "Little Lamb, who made thee?" The speaker, a child, asks the lamb about its origins: how it came into being, how it acquired its particular manner of feeding, its "clothing" of wool, its "tender voice." In the next stanza, the speaker attempts a riddling answer to his own question: the lamb was made by one who "calls himself a Lamb," one who resembles in his gentleness both the child and the lamb. The poem ends with the child bestowing a blessing on the lamb.

Detailed Analysis

Blake asks if we know who gave us life and made us eat this sweet, sweet grass as we roam through fields and next to streams. He asks if we know who gave us our "clothing wooly bright" and our pleasant voices.

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Then he says he's going to tell us who made him. He says our creator is also called a "Lamb" because he was so "meek" and "mild". Despite being a lamb, this creator also "became a little child". Finally, he blesses us twice in the name of God and runs away.

Stanza I Summary

Line 1

Little lamb, who made thee?

The speaker addresses the lamb and asks, "Who made thee?" The speaker is not someone who takes things as they are. He wants to know where they come from. He sounds genuinely curious, but he also places himself above the lamb by calling it "little."

Line 2

Does thou know who made thee,

The speaker repeats his question in a slightly different way. He's all about using those old-sounding English words like "dost" and "thee." Unlike in line 1, where the speaker seems curious, here he sounds like he knows the answer to the question – "Who made thee?" – and is quizzing the lamb. We get the sense that we're going to learn the answer before too long.

Lines 3-4

Gave thee life, and bid thee feed

By the stream and o'er the mead;

These lines extend the question of "Who?" The speaker wants to know who gave the lamb life and that voracious appetite for greenery that leads it to travel by streams and over meadows, or "mead." Put this way, the lamb sounds kind of like a zombie. Instead of busting through windows and shouting, "Braiiins!" it runs through flowery fields and bleats, "Graaaass!" In other words, the lamb didn't create its own desires and appetites. They come from a higher power.

Lines 5-6

Gave thee clothing of delight,

Softest clothing, woolly, bright;

The lamb has a creator who gave it "clothing of delight," which sounds like the next high-end fashion line. This clothing is advertised as "the softest" and "wooly bright." The speaker doesn't seem to mind the redundancy of describing lamb's wool as "wooly." That's like calling someone's hair "hairy." Not too helpful. The wool looks "bright" because it gleams in the sun.

Lines 7-8

Gave thee such a tender voice,

Making all the vales rejoice?

Line 7 is the third in this stanza to begin with the word "Gave." This is one lucky little lamb. As if its fancy clothing weren't enough, it also has a voice so "tender" that it makes the valleys happy as its baaing echoes through them. A "vale" is just a word for valley. When the lamb speaks, the valleys seem to reply with the same joyful voice.

Lines 9-10

Little lamb, who made thee?

Does thou know who made thee?

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In the words of Mr. Justin Timberlake, "Bring it to the chorus!" That's right, you might be shocked to learn, but the "Songs of Innocence" are actually structured like…songs! These lines repeat word for word the first two lines of the poem. Everybody sing along now.

Stanza II Summary

Lines 11-12

Little lamb, I'll tell thee;

Little lamb, I'll tell thee:

Having just rhymed the one-syllable "thee" with, um, "thee," Blake doubles down and does it again. The speaker announces that he will tell the lamb who its creator is. For those of you keeping track at home, here's the box score for lines 9-12: "Little Lamb": 3, "thee": 4. "Thee" takes the lead!

Lines 13-14

He is called by thy name,

For He calls Himself a Lamb

Having promised to say outright who the lamb's creator is, the speaker now starts talking in riddles that avoid a clear answer. The creator, he says, shares the same name as the lamb. And what is the lamb's name? In fact, the lamb's name is "Lamb," and so is the creator's.

Lines 15-16

He is meek, and He is mild,

He became a little child.

OK, we can put it off no longer: the Lamb is a symbol for Jesus Christ. In John 29 of the Bible, Jesus is called "The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." What this poem about innocence doesn't mention is that Christ is a like a lamb because lambs get sacrificed. Gulp.

In the English Christian tradition, Jesus has been called "meek" and "mild" for the way he submitted to God's will and for his gentle treatment of sinful humans. He "became a little child" when he was born into the world (which Christians celebrate on Christmas).

Blake's poem seems to borrow from the words of Englishman Charles Wesley, who published a hymn called "Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild" in 1742. Charles's brother, John Wesley, founded the Methodist Church. The hymn includes the line, "Lamb of God, I look to Thee." If you read the whole thing, you'll see just how much Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience resemble church songs.

Lines 17-18

I a child, and thou a lamb,

We are called by His name.

The speaker reveals himself to be a child. And the lamb…is still a lamb. In fact, all the characters in this poem can be viewed as lambs: child, real lamb, and Jesus. They can also be seen as children – children of God. Got that?

Lines 19-20

Little lamb, God bless thee!

Little lamb, God bless thee!

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In these lines, we imagine the child patting the lamb on the head and running off to find some new adventure. He seems to have been instructing the lovable farm animal on the basics of the Christian religion. He blesses the lamb twice, completing the pattern in which the lamb is addressed as "thee" two times at the beginning and end of each stanza.

Form

"The Lamb" has two stanzas, each containing five rhymed couplets. Repetition in the first and last couplet of each stanza makes these lines into a refrain, and helps to give the poem its song-like quality. The flowing l's and soft vowel sounds contribute to this effect, and also suggest the bleating of a lamb or the lisping character of a child's chant.

Task What are Blake's favorite image of innocence, and how does he use them?

Commentary

The poem is a child's song, in the form of a question and answer. The first stanza is rural and descriptive, while the second focuses on abstract spiritual matters and contains explanation and analogy. The child's question is both naive and profound. The question ("who made thee?") is a simple one, and yet the child is also tapping into the deep and timeless questions that all human beings have, about their own origins and the nature of creation. The poem's apostrophic form contributes to the effect of naiveté, since the situation of a child talking to an animal is a believable one, and not simply a literary contrivance. Yet by answering his own question, the child converts it into a rhetorical one, thus counteracting the initial spontaneous sense of the poem. The answer is presented as a puzzle or riddle, and even though it is an easy one—child's play—this also contributes to an underlying sense of ironic knowingness or artifice in the poem. The child's answer, however, reveals his confidence in his simple Christian faith and his innocent acceptance of its teachings.

The lamb of course symbolizes Jesus. The traditional image of Jesus as a lamb underscores the Christian values of gentleness, meekness, and peace. The image of the child is also associated with Jesus: in the Gospel, Jesus displays a special solicitude for children, and the Bible's depiction of Jesus in his childhood shows him as guileless and vulnerable. These are also the characteristics from which the child-speaker approaches the ideas of nature and of God. This poem, like many of the Songs of Innocence, accepts what Blake saw as the more positive aspects of conventional Christian belief. But it does not provide a completely adequate doctrine, because it fails to account for the presence of suffering and evil in the world. The pendant (or companion) poem to this one, found in the Songs of Experience, is "The Tyger"; taken together, the two poems give a perspective on religion that includes the good and clear as well as the terrible and inscrutable. These poems complement each other to produce a fuller account than either offers independently. They offer a good instance of how Blake himself stands somewhere outside the perspectives of innocence and experience he projects.

1.2.2 The Little Black Boy

Text

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but oh my soul is white!
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereaved of light.
My mother taught me underneath a tree,

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And, sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissed me,
And, pointed to the east, began to say:
"Look on the rising sun: there God does live,
And gives His light, and gives His heat away,
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.
"And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.
"For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear,
The cloud will vanish; we shall hear His voice,
Saying, 'Come out from the grove, my love and care
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice',"
Thus did my mother say, and kissed me;
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy
I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our Father's knee;
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

Summary

A black child tells the story of how he came to know his own identity and to know God. The boy, who was born in "the southern wild" of Africa, first explains that though his skin in black his soul is as white as that of an English child. He relates how his loving mother taught him about God who lives in the East, who gives light and life to all creation and comfort and joy to men. "We are put on earth," his mother says, to learn to accept God's love. He is told that his black skin "We are put on earth," his mother says, to learn to accept God's love. He is told that his black skin "is but a cloud" that will be dissipated when his soul meets God in heaven. The black boy passes on this lesson to an English child, explaining that his white skin is likewise a cloud. He vows that when they are both free of their bodies and delighting in the presence of God, he will shade his white friend until he, too, learns to bear the heat of God's love. Then, the black boy says, he will be like the English boy, and the English boy will love him.

Detailed Analysis

At first glance, Blake's, "The Little Black Boy," ends on a note of subjugation. The speaker holds fast to a desire of acceptance by the white English child. While this desire remains in place, closer examination reveals a subtle position of modest authority as opposed to a submissive stance.

The speaker no doubt longs for validation from the white opposition to his blackness. The exclamation "but O! My soul is white," (2) indicates despair and genuine longing to be recognized and understood.

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Enough so that he colorizes his spirit in a desperate attempt to convince himself it is necessary to be something other to receive his desire. Another seemingly dire example of this primary idea is the final line, "And be like him and he will then love me." (28) This child searches out the love of the white boy so much as to acknowledge the necessity to assimilate.

There is, however, a restrained sense of nave authority in the speaker after his mother explains God's plan. He changes the way he refers to the English child. Instead of "the English child," (3) he refers to him as "little English boy." (22) Little on one hand indicates age and maybe stature, but also represents the newly projected inferiority placed on the English child because he does not have this newfound wisdom. The little black boy who once felt small in spirit now is in a position to impart spiritual knowledge upon he who may have put him there.

His authority is exerted in that he makes concrete actions to attain his goal; to be accepted. He is no longer crying out "O!" in the face of his desperation, but is taking direct action: "Ill shade him" (25) "I'll stand and stroke"(27) "And be like him"(28). The initiators of these actions are not dependent on the desires of the English boy, but solely on the wants and needs of the speaker. If the speaker asked for permission to do these things, or said "And I may be like him," his reluctance would continue to show the balance between the two; he takes charge though, and simply dictates what he will do to achieve the ultimate goal; the English boy's acceptance.

The authoritative stance he takes is colored with naivety. First, the speaker's actions become inconsistent with the idea he is trying to represent. "When I from black and he from white cloud free," (23) indicates the readiness to meet with God and the ability to withstand Him. The speaker's first course of action, however, is to shade the English boy until he is ready to bear the heat. Logically, if they are with God, then the English boy is already prepared to bear the heat. The speaker either unnecessarily doting on the English boy, or implying that the English boy needs the speaker to realize a true relationship with God. The major sense of naivety comes from the conditional nature of the love the speaker is pursuing. It is only if he takes care of the English boy and assimilates himself that he will find his satisfaction.

Once the speaker receives the wisdom of God's plan, he becomes armed with a knowledge that allows him to imagine a situation that he has control over. Although the wisdom is understood from an immature perspective, it gives the speaker the control he needs to cope with such a complicated matter.

'The Little Black Boy' is drawn from the 'Songs of Innocence'. The lyrics composing the 'Songs of Innocence' have the stamp of pastoral innocence and an inspired note of truth and conviction. This poem thus breathes a spirit of innocence, joy and harmony. He looked as black as though he was deprived of light. The mother of this black boy bore him in the wild and backward settlements of the South of the United States of America. Even though his body is black, the boy knows that his soul is white and that he is not essentially different from an English boy who is white. There is a close bond between the child and nature, the mother and the child and the pervading imagery of love, innocence and joy.

Each day his mother would take him beneath a tree and made him sit on her lap and before teaching him anything, she would kiss him. Throughout the heat of the day both would interact with each other in the most sacred of conversations. His pious mother has taught him about the Lord who gives both light and heat and everything we see on this earth. Each morning she would point towards the east and both would watch the sun rise. The East is believed to be the residence of God. Through the sun, God gives His light and heat away in which all the flowers, trees, beast and men receive. The sun according to the boy's mother provides comfort in the morning and joy in the afternoon. She has taught him that in God's eyes there is no difference between a black boy and a white boy, the bodies being immaterial and God's love being universal.

God has put all of us mortal human beings here on earth for a little while that we may learn the true implications of god-like love towards each other. Hence the black bodies and sun burnt face of the boy and his mother are like a dark cloud and a shady grove. If we love each other and bear ourselves

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with understanding and compassion, we will be called to God's presence when all distinctions will have gone and will rejoice around him like laments.

The lesson that the mother provides for her little son ends each time with an affectionate kiss. The little black boy has finally regained his confidence and is bold enough to tell the white little English boy that they are both clouds-like spirit coming from different coloured background. Like two little lambs of different colours, they can sing and dance with joy around the tent of God in Heaven.

The little black boy promised to take care of the little white English boy and protect him from the scorching heat of the sun till he himself learn to bear it for himself. Both shall prostrate before The Father in Heaven's knees. Then he would stand and stroke the Father's silvery hair and he would be like the Father and be loved by Him.

Form

The poem is in heroic quatrains, which are stanzas of pentameter lines rhyming ABAB. The form is a variation on the ballad stanza, and the slightly longer lines are well suited to the pedagogical tone of this poem.

Commentary

This poem centers on a spiritual awakening to a divine love that transcends race. The speaker is an African child who has to come to terms with his own blackness. Blake builds the poem on clear imagery of light and dark. The contrast in the first stanza between the child's black skin and his belief in the whiteness of his soul lends poignancy to his particular problem of self-understanding. In a culture in which black and white connote bad and good, respectively, the child's developing sense of self requires him to perform some fairly elaborate symbolic gymnastics with these images of color. His statement that he is "black as if bereav'd of light" underscores the gravity of the problem. The gesture of his song will be to counteract this "as if" in a way that shows him to be as capable and deserving of perfect love as a white person is.

The child's mother symbolizes a natural and selfless love that becomes the poem's ideal. She shows a tender concern for her child's self-esteem, as well as a strong desire that he know the comfort of God. She persuades him, according to conventional Christian doctrine, that earthly life is but a preparation for the rewards of heaven. In this context, their dark skin is similarly but a temporary appearance, with no bearing on their eternal essence: skin, which is a factor only in this earthly life, becomes irrelevant from the perspective of heaven. Body and soul, black and white, and earth and heaven are all aligned in a rhetorical gesture that basically confirms the stance of Christian resignation: the theology of the poem is one that counsels forbearance in the present and promises a recompense for suffering in the hereafter.

The black boy internalizes his mother's lesson and applies it in his relations with the outer world; specifically, Blake shows us what happens when the boy applies it to his relationship with a white child. The results are ambivalent. The boy explains to his white friend that they are equals, but that neither will be truly free until they are released from the constraints of the physical world. He imagines himself shading his friend from the brightness of God's love until he can become accustomed to it. This statement implies that the black boy is better prepared for heaven than the white boy, perhaps because of the greater burden of his dark skin has posed during earthly life. This is part of the consoling vision with which his mother has prepared him, which allows his suffering to become a source of pride rather than shame. But the boy's outlook, and his deference to the white boy, may strike the reader (who has not his innocence) as containing a naive blindness to the realities of oppression and racism, and a too-passive acceptance of suffering and injustice. We do not witness the response of the white boy; Blake's focus in this poem is on the mental state of the black child. But the question remains of whether the child's outlook is servile and self-demeaning, or exemplifies Christian charity. The poem itself implies that these might amount to the same thing.

Notes

1.3 William Blake: Songs of Experience

1.3.1 A Poison Tree

Text

I was angry with my friend.
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe.
I told it not, my wrath did grow;

And I water'd it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles;

And it grew both day and night
Till it bore an apple bright,
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole

When the night had veil'd the pole.
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

"A Poison Tree" is one of the lesser-known of the twenty-six poems William Blake published in 1793 as Songs of Experience, which also contains "The Tyger," "Ah, Sun-flower," and "London." Songs of Experience is the companion volume to Blake's Songs of Innocence, published in 1789. Blake printed Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience in one volume in 1794, adding the descriptive subtitle "Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul." One of the best sources of "A Poison Tree" is The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake (1982), edited by David V. Erdman and published by Doubleday.

In the poems of Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience, Blake contrasts how the human spirit blossoms when allowed its own free movement, which he calls a state of "innocence," and how it turns in on itself after it has been suppressed and forced to conform to rules, systems, and doctrines, which he calls a state of "experience." The two states recall one of the principal events in the Judeo-Christian story, the fall from innocence caused by Adam and Eve when they eat fruit from the forbidden Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden. The poison tree of Blake's poem suggests that biblical tree.

Task Comment of Blake's use of the ballad form.

Although it can be read by itself, "A Poison Tree" benefits significantly from being read as a further expression of the poems immediately preceding it in Songs of Experience, especially "The Garden

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of Love" and "The Human Abstract." In the three poems, Blake criticizes the imposition of religious and social morality on the human sensibility, suggesting that it stifles the goodness and love inherent in a spirit not fettered by such rules. In Blake's Notebook, the original title of "A Poison Tree" is "Christian Forbearance," which the poem criticizes as the cause of hypocrisy.

Analysis

Stanza 1

William Blake speaks of someone, his friend and his foe, whom has he is angry with.

When he says 'I told my wrath, my wrath did end' after he said he was angry with his friend, he is saying he was able to get over being angry with his friend and forgot about it. Although, it is quite the opposite when he mentions' I told it not, and my wrath did grow'. Blake is saying that with his enemy, he allowed himself to get angry, and therefore, his wrath did grow.

Stanza 2

In this stanza, Blake begins to make his anger grow and he takes pleasure in it, comparing his anger with something, in this case, a tree or plant. The speaker says he 'sunned it with smiles' and 'and with soft, deceitful wiles'. This means he is creating an illusion with his enemy saying he is pretending to be friendly to seduce and bring him closer.

Stanza 3

'And it grew both day and night' and 'til it bore an apple bright' are meaning that his illusion with his enemy is growing and growing until it became a strong and tempting thing. His illusion has a metaphor and it is an apple. After, his foe believes it shines, which means he thinks it's true and means something, and takes Blake illusion seriously. 'And he knew it was mine' suggests that he really thinks Blake is his friend.

Stanza 4

Being the last stanza, Blake needed to come up with a conclusion. He has used the two lines 'in the morning glad I see' and 'my foe outstretched beneath the tree' to say that his foe finally fell to his tempting illusion and metaphorically, consumed his poison apple and died. So, obviously, his malicious intentions were hidden behind illusion and he prevailed over his enemy.

1.3.2 The Tyger

Text

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?

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And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?
What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?
Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Summary

The poem begins with the speaker asking a fearsome tiger what kind of divine being could have created it: "What immortal hand or eye/ Could frame they fearful symmetry?" Each subsequent stanza contains further questions, all of which refine this first one. From what part of the cosmos could the tiger's fiery eyes have come, and who would have dared to handle that fire? What sort of physical presence, and what kind of dark craftsmanship, would have been required to "twist the sinews" of the tiger's heart? The speaker wonders how, once that horrible heart "began to beat," its creator would have had the courage to continue the job. Comparing the creator to a blacksmith, he ponders about the anvil and the furnace that the project would have required and the smith who could have wielded them. And when the job was done, the speaker wonders, how would the creator have felt? "Did he smile his work to see?" Could this possibly be the same being who made the lamb?

Form

The poem is comprised of six quatrains in rhymed couplets. The meter is regular and rhythmic, its hammering beat suggestive of the smithy that is the poem's central image. The simplicity and neat proportions of the poems form perfectly suit its regular structure, in which a string of questions all contribute to the articulation of a single, central idea.

Commentary

The opening question enacts what will be the single dramatic gesture of the poem, and each subsequent stanza elaborates on this conception. Blake is building on the conventional idea that nature, like a work of art, must in some way contain a reflection of its creator. The tiger is strikingly beautiful yet also horrific in its capacity for violence. What kind of a God, then, could or would design such a terrifying beast as the tiger? In more general terms, what does the undeniable existence of evil and violence in the world tell us about the nature of God, and what does it mean to live in a world where a being can at once contain both beauty and horror?

The tiger initially appears as a strikingly sensuous image. However, as the poem progresses, it takes on a symbolic character, and comes to embody the spiritual and moral problem the poem explores: perfectly beautiful and yet perfectly destructive, Blake's tiger becomes the symbolic center for an investigation into the presence of evil in the world. Since the tiger's remarkable nature exists

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both in physical and moral terms, the speaker's questions about its origin must also encompass both physical and moral dimensions. The poem's series of questions repeatedly ask what sort of physical creative capacity the "fearful symmetry" of the tiger bespeaks; assumedly only a very strong and powerful being could be capable of such a creation.

The smithy represents a traditional image of artistic creation; here Blake applies it to the divine creation of the natural world. The "forging" of the tiger suggests a very physical, laborious, and deliberate kind of making; it emphasizes the awesome physical presence of the tiger and precludes the idea that such a creation could have been in any way accidentally or haphazardly produced. It also continues from the first description of the tiger the imagery of fire with its simultaneous connotations of creation, purification, and destruction. The speaker stands in awe of the tiger as a sheer physical and aesthetic achievement, even as he recoils in horror from the moral implications of such a creation; for the poem addresses not only the question of who could make such a creature as the tiger, but who would perform this act. This is a question of creative responsibility and of will, and the poet carefully includes this moral question with the consideration of physical power. Note, in the third stanza, the parallelism of "shoulder" and "art," as well as the fact that it is not just the body but also the "heart" of the tiger that is being forged. The repeated use of word the "dare" to replace the "could" of the first stanza introduces a dimension of aspiration and willfulness into the sheer might of the creative act.

The reference to the lamb in the penultimate stanza reminds the reader that a tiger and a lamb have been created by the same God, and raises questions about the implications of this. It also invites a contrast between the perspectives of "experience" and "innocence" represented here and in the poem "The Lamb." "The Tyger" consists entirely of unanswered questions, and the poet leaves us to awe at the complexity of creation, the sheer magnitude of God's power, and the inscrutability of divine will. The perspective of experience in this poem involves a sophisticated acknowledgment of what is unexplainable in the universe, presenting evil as the prime example of something that cannot be denied, but will not withstand facile explanation, either. The open awe of "The Tyger" contrasts with the easy confidence, in "The Lamb," of a child's innocent faith in a benevolent universe.

Analysis

The Tyger belongs to Songs of Experience which was written by William Blake. The Romantic poet published his collection of poems himself in London, in 1794. The poet came up with a technique called 'relief etching' to be able to add his illustrations.

The poem contains six quatrains; and its rhyme is assonant, and follows perfectly the pattern aabb due to, in the case of the first and the sixth stanzas, the word 'symmetry' is pronounced in such a way that it rhymes with 'eye.

With regard to the semantic fields, there are words related to the tools used by an ironsmith like, for instance, 'hammer', 'chain', 'furnace', and 'anvil', in the fourth stanza. Also, we can find a semantic field related to Nature like, for example, 'forests' (line 2), 'skies' (line 5), 'Tyger' (lines 1 and 21), and 'Lamb' (line 20). But, above all, the poet used a semantic field related to Creation when he writes words or phases like:

'What immortal hand and eye

Could frame thy fearful symmetry?'

Did u know? The simple structure and the vocabulary help the reader to understand the main topics or concepts, which are Evil, Good, and God.

The first impression that William Blake gives is that he sees a terrible tiger in the night, and, as a result of his state of panic, the poet exaggerates the description of the animal when he writes:

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'Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright

In the forests of the night…'

However, paying more attention to what comes next, the author talks about Evil, and Good, as I said above. These two essential ideas are symbolised in the 'Tyger' and the 'Lamb', respectively (notice that both words have capital letters).

Immediately after seeing the 'Tyger' in the forests, the poet asks it what deity could have created it:

'What immortal hand and eye,

Could frame thy fearful symmetry?'

The word 'immortal' gives the reader a clue that the poet refers to God. Then, in the second stanza, the author wonders in what far-away places the tiger was made, maybe, referring that these places cannot be reached by any mortal. In the third stanza, the poet asks again, once the tiger's heart began to beat, who could make such a frightening and evil animal. Next, in the forth stanza, William Blake asks questions about the tools used by God. And he names the hammer, the chain, the furnace, and anvil. All these elements are used by an ironsmith. Thus, according to the poet, God is a kind of craftsman. After that, in the fifth stanza, the poet asks two significant questions. The first one refers to God's feelings:

'Did he smile his work to see?'

In other words, was God happy with his creation? The second question is:

'Did he who made the Lamb make thee?'

William Blake does not understand why or how the deity who is responsible for good and innocence, is, at he same time, the same who inserts violence and evil in this world. However, the poet does not make any statement at any moment. He only asks questions which invite the reader to think about. Finally, the last stanza is the same as the first one which may indicate that the author is not able to understand the world where we live.

To conclude, William Blake wrote the poem with a simple structure and a perfect rhyme to help the reader see the images he wanted to transmit. Above all, the description of the tiger is glaringly graphic due to essentially the contrast between fire and night.

1.3.3 The Sick Rose

Text

O Rose, thou art sick!

The invisible worm

That flies in the night,

In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed

Of crimson joy:

And his dark secret love

Does thy life destroy.

Summary

The speaker, addressing a rose, informs it that it is sick. An "invisible" worm has stolen into its bed in a "howling storm" and under the cover of night. The "dark secret love" of this worm is destroying the rose's life.

Notes

Form

The two quatrains of this poem rhyme ABCB. The ominous rhythm of these short, two-beat lines contributes to the poem's sense of foreboding or dread and complements the unflinching directness with which the speaker tells the rose she is dying.

Commentary

While the rose exists as a beautiful natural object that has become infected by a worm, it also exists as a literary rose, the conventional symbol of love. The image of the worm resonates with the Biblical serpent and also suggests a phallus. Worms are quintessentially earthbound, and symbolize death and decay. The "bed" into which the worm creeps denotes both the natural flowerbed and also the lovers' bed. The rose is sick, and the poem implies that love is sick as well. Yet the rose is unaware of its sickness. Of course, an actual rose could not know anything about its own condition, and so the emphasis falls on the allegorical suggestion that it is love that does not recognize its own ailing state. This results partly from the insidious secrecy with which the "worm" performs its work of corruption—not only is it invisible, it enters the bed at night. This secrecy indeed constitutes part of the infection itself. The "crimson joy" of the rose connotes both sexual pleasure and shame, thus joining the two concepts in a way that Blake thought was perverted and unhealthy.

Notes The rose's joyful attitude toward love is tainted by the aura of shame and secrecy that our culture attaches to love.

Analysis

The poem describes a sick rose and a worm that manages to locate the roses's "bed of crimson joy." The worm destroys the rose with his "dark secret love," a not so subtle reference to some kind of destructive sexuality.

Lines 1-4: Summary

Line 1

O rose thou art sick

The poem opens with the speaker addressing the rose. The speaker tells the rose that it is sick.

Lines 2-4

The invisible worm,

That flies in the night

In the howling storm

The speaker describes as "invisible worm" that flies. The worm can also fly when it's raining. We don't know what this worm is doing in the poem or even what kind of worm it is. An invisible worm that can fly? Is it some kind of butterfly?

Lines 5-6

Has found out thy bed

Of crimson joy:

The speaker tells us more about the worm; it has found the rose's bed. The status of this "bed" is ambiguous. It could be just a place where the rose sleeps that happens to be "crimson". It could also be a "bed" of something, like a "bed of roses" or something else that's red. This would make the rose a gardener of some kind.

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Lines 7-8

And his dark secret love

Does thy life destroy.

The speaker tells us that the worm's "love" kills the rose. It's strange the "love" is killing something here, since we usually associate love with life. "Dark secret love" could mean three things. It could mean the worm's love, as in "My love for you will never die".

It could also refer to something that the worm loves, as in, "Hello, my love, I'm home". It might even refer to the act of making love, or sex.

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Which of the following is not one of Blake's major prophetic books?
   (a) The Four Zoas (b) Songs of Innocence
   (c) Milton (d) Jerusalem
2. Which of these poems is probably about sexually transmitted disease?
   (a) The Garden of Love (b) The Sick Rose
   (c) Little Girl Lost (d) The Chimney Sweep
3. William Blake received formal education in only one subject. Which?
   (a) Art (b) Greek
   (c) Literature (d) Blacksmithing
4. Which book is subtitled "Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul"?
   (a) Songs of Innocence and Experience (b) Poetical Sketches
   (c) The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (d) Jerusalem
5. Whose mother died when he "was very young," and who was sold before his "tongue/Could scarcely cry"?
   (a) The Little Black Boy (b) The Chimney Sweeper
   (c) The Little Boy Lost (d) The School-Boy
6. Did Blake teach his wife to read?
   (a) Yes (b) No
7. Who says, "And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,/And be like him, and he will then love me"?
   (a) The Little Black Boy (b) The Little Boy Found
   (c) The Little Girl Lost (d) The Chimney Sweeper
8. Blake once pushed a soldier out of his garden and all the way to a nearby inn, where the soldier was quartered. The soldier then charged Blake with what?
   (a) Blasphemy (b) Assault
   (c) Sedition (d) Battery
9. Complete this line from "The Tyger": "Did he smile his work to see? Did he who made the ..... make thee?"
   (a) Lamb (b) Heart
   (c) World (d) Brain

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10. Blake was a rousing success not only as a poet but also as a painter, with his one-man show drawing enormous crowds. Is this statement true or false?

(a) True (b) False

11. Which work contains a title page depicting a naked man throwing himself upon a scantily clad woman, while another woman looks on?

(a) The Four Zoas (b) The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

(c) The Book of Thel (d) Visions of the Daughters of Albion

12. When he died, Blake had been working on illustrations for the writing of which author?

(a) Byron (b) Boccacio

(c) Shelley (d) Dante

13. Whose sigh "runs in blood down Palace walls"?

(a) The Happless Soldier's (b) The Little Vagabond's

(c) The Little Black Boy's (d) The Chimney Sweep's

14. Which of the following books, according to Blake, contained all he knew?

(a) The Bible (b) The Talmud

(c) The Inferno (d) The Canterbury Tales

15. Who was "binding with briars" the poet's "joys and desires" in "The Garden of Love"?

(a) His Wife (b) Priests

(c) The Constable (d) Christ

1.4 Summary

- Songs of Innocence and of Experience is an illustrated collection of poems by William Blake.
- The lamb of course symbolizes Jesus. The traditional image of Jesus as a lamb underscores the Christian values of gentleness, meekness, and peace.
- At first glance, Blake's, "The Little Black Boy," ends on a note of subjugation.
- In the poems of Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience, Blake contrasts how the human spirit blossoms.
- The meter is regular and rhythmic, its hammering beat suggestive of the smithy that is the poem's central image.
- The rose's joyful attitude toward love is tainted by the aura of shame and secrecy that our culture attaches to love.

1.5 Keywords

Sermon : A sermon is an oration by a prophet or member of the clergy.

Irony : Irony is a rhetorical device, literary technique, or situation in which there is a sharp incongruity or discordance that goes beyond the simple and evident intention of words or actions.

Restoration : Restoration literature is the English literature written during the historical period commonly referred to as the English Restoration (1660–1689), which corresponds to the last years of the direct Stuart reign in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland.

Mock-heroic : Mock-heroic, mock-epic or heroic-comic works are typically satires or parodies that mock common Classical stereotypes of heroes and heroic literature.

Notes

1.6 Review Questions

1. How does Blake portray nature? How does the conception of nature differ in the *Songs of Innocence* and the *Songs of Experience*?
2. Are Blake's poems symbolic? Explain your answer.
3. How does Blake use repetition in the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*?
4. How does Blake portray childhood?
5. What can you discern from these poems about Blake's views on religion?

Answers: Self Assessment

1.	(b)	2.	(b)	3.	(a)	4.	(a)	5.	(b)
6.	(a)	7.	(a)	8.	(c)	9.	(a)	10.	(b)
11.	(c)	12.	(d)	13.	(a)	14.	(a)	15.	(b)

1.7 Further Readings

Books

Alexander Pope: Selected Poetry and Prose	— Alexander Pope
Alexander Pope	— Paul Baines
Thomas Gray: a life	— Robert L Mack
Elegy written in a Country Church Yard	— Thomas Gray
William Blake	— G.K.Chesterton

Online links

http://www.gradesaver.com/songs-of-innocence-and-of-experience/

http://eview.anu.edu.au/cross-sections/vol1/pdf/ch12.pdf

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Unit 2: Major Literary Terms-I

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about assonance, blank verse and ballad
- Know about the classification and origins of ballad.

Introduction

Genre is an important word in the English class. We teach different genres of literature such as poetry, short stories, myths, plays, non-fiction, novels, mysteries, and so on. When we speak about a kind of literature we are really speaking about a genre of literature. So when someone asks you what genre of literature you like, you might answer, poetry, novels, comics, and so on.

2.1 Introduction to Assonance

2.1.1 Assonance

Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds to create internal rhyming within phrases or sentences, and together with alliteration and consonance serves as one of the building blocks of verse. For example, in the phrase "D**o** y**ou** like bl**ue**?", the /u:/ is repeated within the sentence and is assonant.

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Did u know? Assonance is found more often in verse than in prose. It is used in (mainly modern) English-language poetry, and is particularly important in Old French, Spanish and Celtic languages.

The eponymous student of Willy Russell's Educating Rita described it as "getting the rhyme wrong".

Examples

1.	The silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain	— Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven"
2.	And murmuring of innumerable bees	— Alfred Lord Tennyson, The Princess VII.203
3.	The crumbling thunder of seas	— Robert Louis Stevenson
4.	That solitude which suits abstruser musings	— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight"
5.	The scurrying furred small friars squeal in the dowse	— Dylan Thomas
6.	Dead in the middle of little Italy, little did we know that we riddled two middle men who didn't do diddily.	— Big Pun, "Twinz"
7.	It's hot and it's monotonous	— Stephen Sondheim, Sunday in the Park with George, It's Hot Up Here
8.	Tundi tur unda	— Catullus 11
9.	On a proud round cloud in white high night	— E.E.Cummings, if a Cheer Rules Elephant Angel Child Should Sit
10.	I've never seen so many Dominician women with cinnamon tans	— Will Smith, "Miami"
11.	I bomb atomically-Socrates' philosophies and hypotheses can't define how I be droppin' these mockeries	— Inspectah Deck, from the Wu-Tang Clan's "Triumph"
12.	Up in the arroyo a rare owl's nest I did spy, so I loaded up my shotgun and watched owl feathers fly	— Jon Wayne, Texas Assonance
13.	Some kids who played games about Narnia got gradually balmier and balmier	— C.S. Lewis, "The Voysge of the Dawn Treader
14.	And the moon rose over an open field	— Paul Simon, America
15.	Yo, I'm a hot and bothered astronaut crashing while Jacking off to buffering vids of Asher Roth eating apple sauce	— Earl Sweatshirt of OFWGKTA –"Earl"

Notes

J. R. R. Tolkien's Errantry is a poem whose meter contains three sets of trisyllabic assonances in every set of four lines. Assonance can also be used in forming proverbs, often a form of short poetry. In the Oromo language of Ethiopia, note the use of a single vowel throughout the following proverb, an extreme form of assonance:

- kan mana baala, alaa gaala ("A leaf at home, but a camel elsewhere"; somebody who has a big reputation among those who do not know him well.)

In more modern verse, stressed assonance is frequently used as a rhythmic device in modern rap. An example is Public Enemy's 'Don't Believe The Hype': "Their pens and pads I snatch 'cause I've **had it**/I'm not an **addict**, fiending for **static**/I see their tape recorder and I **grab it**/No, you can't **have it** back, silly **rabbit**".

Assonance differs from RHYME in that RHYME is a similarity of vowel and consonant. "Lake" and "fake" demonstrate RHYME; "lake" and "fate" assonance. Assonance is a common substitution for END-RHYME in the popular ballad, as in these lines from "The Twa Corbies":

In behint yon auld fail dyke,

I wot there lies a new-slain Knight.

Such substitution of assonance for END-RHYME is also characteristic of Emily Dickinson's verse, and is used extensively by many contemporary poets.

2.2 Introduction to Ballad

Ballad is a form of verse, often a narrative set to music. Ballads were particularly characteristic of British and Irish popular poetry and song from the later medieval period until the 19th century and used extensively across Europe and later the Americas, Australia and North Africa. Many ballads were written and sold as single sheet broadsides. The form was often used by poets and composers from the 18th century onwards to produce lyrical ballads. In the later 19th century it took on the meaning of a slow form of popular love song and the term is now often used as synonymous with any love song, particularly the pop or rock power ballad.

2.2.1 Origins of Ballad

The ballad probably derives its name from medieval French dance songs or "ballares" (from which we also get ballet), as did the alternative rival form that became the French Ballade. In theme and function they may originate from Scandinavian and Germanic traditions of storytelling that can be seen in poems such as Beowulf.

Notes The earliest example we have of a recognisable ballad in form in England is 'Judas' in a 13th-century manuscript.

2.2.2 Ballad Form

Most, but not all, northern and west European ballads are written in ballad stanzas or quatrains (four-line stanzas) of alternating lines of iambic (an unstressed followed by a stressed syllable) tetrameter (eight syllables) and iambic trimeter (six syllables), known as ballad meter. Usually, only the second and fourth line of a quatrain are rhymed (in the scheme *a*, *b*, *c*, *b*), which has been taken to suggest that, originally, ballads consisted of couplets (two lines) of rhymed verse, each of 14 syllables. As can be seen in this stanza from 'Lord Thomas and Fair Annet':

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The **horse** | fair **Ann** | et **rode** | up**on** |
He **amb** | led **like** | the **wind** |,
With **sil** | ver **he** | was **shod** | be**fore**,
With **burn** | ing **gold** | be**hind** |.

However, there is considerable variation on this pattern in almost every respect, including length, number of lines and rhyming scheme, making the strict definition of a ballad extremely difficult. In southern and Eastern Europe, and in countries that derive their tradition from them, ballad structure differs significantly, like Spanish romanceros, which are octosyllabic and use consonance rather than rhyme.

Task Explain ballad form and traditional ballads.

In all traditions most ballads are narrative in nature, with a self-contained story, often concise and relying on imagery, rather than description, which can be tragic, historical, romantic or comic. Another common feature of ballads is repetition, sometimes of fourth lines in succeeding stanzas, as a refrain, sometimes of third and fourth lines of a stanza and sometimes of entire stanzas.

2.2.3 Classification of Ballads

European Ballads have been generally classified into three major groups: traditional, broadside and literary. In America a distinction is drawn between ballads that are versions of European, particularly British and Irish songs, and 'native American ballads', developed without reference to earlier songs. A further development was the evolution of the blues ballad, which mixed the genre with Afro-American music. For the late 19th century the music publishing industry found a market for what are often termed sentimental ballads, and these are the origin of the modern use of the term ballad to mean a slow love song.

2.2.4 Traditional Ballads

The traditional, classical or popular (meaning of the people) ballad has been seen as originating with the wandering minstrels of late medieval Europe. From the end of the 15th century we have printed ballads that suggest a rich tradition of popular music. We know from a reference in William Langland's Piers Plowman, that ballads about Robin Hood were being sung from at least the late 14th century and the oldest detailed material we have is Wynkyn de Worde's collection of Robin Hood ballads printed about 1495.

Early collections of ballads were made by Samuel Pepys (1633–1703) and in the Roxburghe Ballads collected by Robert Harley, 1st Earl of Oxford and Mortimer (1661–1724). In the 18th century there were increasing numbers of such collections, including Thomas D'Urfey's Wit and Mirth: or, Pills to Purge Melancholy (1719–20) and Bishop Thomas Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765). The last of these also contained some oral material and by the end of the 18th century this was becoming increasingly common, with collections including John Ritson's, The Bishopric Garland (1784), which paralleled the work of figures like Robert Burns and Walter Scott in Scotland.

Key work on the traditional ballad was undertaken in the late 19th century in Denmark by Svend Grundtvig and for England and Scotland by the Harvard professor Francis James Child. They attempted to record and classify all the known ballads and variants in their chosen regions. Since

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Child died before writing a commentary on his work it is uncertain exactly how and why he differentiated the 305 ballads printed that would be published as The English and Scottish Popular Ballads. There have been many different and contradictory attempts to classify traditional ballads by theme, but commonly identified types are the religious, supernatural, tragic, love ballads, historic, legendary and humorous.

2.2.5 Broadsides Ballads

Broadside ballads were a product of the development of cheap print in the 16th century. They were generally printed on one side of a medium to large sheet of poor quality paper. In their heyday of the first half of the 17th century, they were printed in black-letter or gothic type and included multiple, eye-catching illustrations, a popular tune tile, as well as an alluring poem. By the 18th century, they were printed in white letter or roman type and often without much decoration. These later sheets could include many individual songs, which would be cut apart and sold individually as "slipsongs." Alternatively, they might be folded to make small cheap books or "chapbooks" which often drew on ballad stories. They were produced in huge numbers, with over 400,000 being sold in England annually by the 1660s. Tessa Watt estimates the number of copies sold may have been in the millions. Many were sold by travelling chapmen in city streets or at fairs. The subject matter varied from what has been defined as the traditional ballad, although many traditional ballads were printed as broadsides. Among the topics were love, religion, drinking-songs, legends, and early journalism, which included disasters, political events and signs, wonders and prodigies.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. ..... is the repetition of vowel sounds to create internal rhyming within phrases or sentences.
2. Assonance is a common substitution of ..... in the popular ballad.
3. Ballad is a form of ..... .
4. European ballads have been generally classified into ..... major groups.
5. ..... is poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter.

2.2.6 Literary Ballads

Literary or lyrical ballads grew out of an increasing interest in the ballad form among social elites and intellectuals, particularly in the Romantic Movement from the later 18th century. Respected literary figures like Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott in Scotland both collected and wrote their own ballads, using the form to create an artistic product. Similarly in England William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge produced a collection of Lyrical Ballads in 1798, including Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. At the same time in Germany Goethe cooperated with Schiller on a series of ballads, some of which were later set to music by Schubert. Later important examples of the poetic form included Rudyard Kipling's 'Barrack Room Ballads' (1892-6) and Oscar Wilde's 'Ballad of Reading Goal' (1897).

2.3 Introduction to Blank Verse

Blank verse is poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter. It has been described as "probably the most common and influential form that English poetry has taken since the sixteenth century" and Paul Fussell has claimed that "about three-quarters of all English poetry is in blank verse."

Notes

The first documented use of blank verse in the English language was by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey in his translation of the Aenied. He was possibly inspired by the Latin original, as classical Latin verse (as well as Greek verse) did not use rhyme; or he may have been inspired by the Italian verse form of Versi Sciolti, which also contained no rhyme. The play, Arden of Faversham (circa 1590 by an unknown author) is a notable example of end-stopped blank verse.

Christopher Marlowe was the first English author to make full use of the potential of blank verse, and also established it as the dominant verse form for English drama in the age of Elizabeth I and James I. The major achievements in English blank verse were made by William Shakespeare, who wrote much of the content of his plays in unrhymed iambic pentameter, and Milton, whose Paradise Lost is written in blank verse. Miltonic blank verse was widely imitated in the 18th century by such poets as James Thomson (in The Seasons) and William Cowper (in The Task). Romantic English poets such as William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats used blank verse as a major form. Shortly afterwards, Alfred, Lord Tennyson became particularly devoted to blank verse, using it for example in his long narrative poem "The Princess", as well as for one of his most famous poems: "Ulysses". Among American poets, Hart Crane and Wallace Stevens are notable for using blank verse in extended compositions at a time when many other poets were turning to free verse.

Blank Verse is any verse comprised of unrhymed lines all in the same meter, usually *iambic pentameter*. It was developed in Italy and became widely used during the Renaissance because it resembled classical, unrhymed poetry. Marlowe's "mighty line," which demonstrated blank verse's range and flexibility, made blank verse the standard for many English writers, including both Shakespeare and Milton, and it remained a very practiced form up until the twentieth century when Modernism rebelled and openly experimented with the tradition. Regardless, blank verse was embraced by Yeats, Pound, Frost, and Stevens who skillfully brought the tradition through this century. While it may not be as common as open form, it retains an important role in the world of poetry.

Blank verse can be composed in any meter and with any amount of feet per line (any line length), though the iamb is generally the predominant foot. Along with the iamb are 3 other standard feet and a number of variations that can be employed in a blank verse poem. It is difficult almost impossible to write a blank verse poem consisting of all iambs and other types of feet get used more often than one may think. These are:

1. Iamb-two syllables, unstressed-stressed, as in "today".
2. Trochee-two syllables, stressed-unstressed, as in "standard".
3. Anapest-three syllables, unstressed-unstressed-stressed, as in "disengage".
4. Dactyl-three syllables, stressed-unstressed-unstressed, as in "probably".

Variations include:

1. Headless Iamb or Tailess Trochee- one stressed syllable. Labeling the foot depends on where it is located in the line.
2. Spondee- two stressed syllables, as in "hot dog".
3. Amphibrach- three syllables, unstressed-stressed-unstressed, as in "forgetful".
4. Double Iamb- four syllables, unstressed-unstressed-stressed-stressed, as in "will you eat it?" A double iamb is counted as two feet.

Blank verse can be written with any combination of the above feet. The name of the dominant foot coupled with the number of feet in the line provides the name of a poem's meter. For example, the dominant foot in Robert Frost's "Mending Wall" is the iamb, and there are five feet per line. Thus, the poem is written in iambic pentameter. However, that not each foot is an iamb, but Frost mixes up the feet, as in the first few lines of the poem.

Notes

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,

That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,

And spills the upper boulders in the sun.

When we read the words, the natural rhythm is not de-dum, de-dum, de-dum—it is not strictly iambic. The first line, for example, scans as a trochee and four iambs. *Scansion*, by the way is how poets demonstrate the meter of a poem using accents to show the stressed syllables. With scanning, one can tell if a poem is metered or not and, if so, what kind of meter is present, as in "Mending Wall:"

"Something there is that doesn't love a wall".

Of course, how a person scans a single line or an entire poem depends on the reader's natural rhythms and inclinations, and, while there may be better ways to scan a poem, there is not always a single correct scan. In the first line of "Mending Wall", for instance, the first iamb *could* be read as a trochee, with the stress falling on "there" instead of "is."

2.4 Summary

- Genre is an important word in the English class. We teach different genres of literature such as poetry, short stories, myths, plays, non-fiction, novels, mysteries, and so on.
- Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds to create internal rhyming within phrases or sentences.
- European Ballads have been generally classified into three major groups: traditional, broad-side and literary.
- The traditional, classical or popular ballad has been seen as originating with the wandering minstrels of late medieval Europe.
- Broadside ballads were a product of the development of cheap print in the 16th century.

2.5 Keywords

Rhyme : Correspondence of sound between words or the endings of words.

Assonance : The resemblance of sound between syllables in near by words arising from the rhyming of stressed vowels.

Eponymous : A word or name derived from the name of a person.

Tetrameter : A verse of four measures.

2.6 Review Questions

1. What do you mean by the term Assonance?
2. What is Ballad and Classification of ballads? Explain.
3. Define literary ballads.
4. Explain blank verse.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. Assonance
2. End-Rhyme
3. Verse
4. Three
5. Blank verse

Notes

2.7 Further Readings

Books

A Glossary of Literary Terms — M.H.Abrams
Literary Terms: a practical glossary — Brian Moon
A Guide to Literary Terms — Gail Rae
A new handbook of Literary terms — David Mikics

Online links

http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/lit_terms/terms/Literary.Terms.html
http://92.243.10.209:8080/liceospano/webdocs/documenti/
http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/

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Unit 3: Major Literary Terms-II

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about neoclassicism, romanticism, conceit, couplet elegy and epic
- Discuss the term romanticism and music
- Explain the term conceit, metaphysical conceit and petrarchan conceit
- Know about the term couplet, elegy, epic and oral epic.

Notes

Introduction

Literary devices refers to specific aspects of literature, in the sense of its universal function as an art form which expresses ideas through language, which we can recognize, identify, interpret and/ot analyze. Literary devices collectively comprise the art form's components; the means by which authors create meaning through language, and by which readers gain understanding of and appreciation for their works. They also provide a conceptual framework for comparing individual literary works to others, both within and across genres. Both literary elements and literary techniques can rightly be called literary devices.

3.1 Neoclassicism

Neoclassicism is the name given to Western movements in the decorative and visual arts, literature, theatre, music, and architecture that draw inspiration from the "classical" art and culture of Ancient Greece or Ancient Rome. One such movement was dominant in Europe from the mid-18th to the 19th centuries. Neoclassicism is opposed to Modernism, in which self-expression and improvisation are considered virtues.

The English Neoclassical movement, predicated upon and derived from both classical and contemporary French models, embodied a group of attitudes toward art and human existence-ideals of order, logic, restraint, accuracy, "correctness," "restraint," decorum, and so on, which would enable the practitioners of various arts to imitate or reproduce the structures and themes of Greek or Roman orginals. Though its origins were much earlier, Neoclassicism dominated English literature from the Restoration in 1660 until the end of the eighteenth century, when the publication of Lyrical Ballads (1798) by Wordsworth and Coleridge marked the full emergence of Romanticism.

"Neoclassicism" in each art implies a particular canon of "classic" models-*e.g*. Virgil, Raphael, Nicolas Poussin, and Haydn. Other cultures have other canons of classics, however, and a recurring strain of neoclassicism appears to be the natural expression of cultures that are confident of their mainstream traditions, but also feel the need to regain something that has slipped away.

Neoclassicism was a widespread and influential movement in painting and the other visual arts that began in the 1760s, reached its height in the 1780s and '90s, and lasted until the 1840s and '50s. In painting it generally took the form of an emphasis on austere linear design in the depiction of classical themes and subject matter, using archaeologically correct settings and costumes.

Neoclassicism arose partly as a reaction against the sensuous and frivolously decorative Rococo style that had dominated European art from the 1720s on. But an even more profound stimulus was the new and more scientific interest in classical antiquity that arose in the 18th century. Neoclassicism was given great impetus by new archaeological discoveries, particularly the exploration and excavation of the buried Roman cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, the excavations of which began in 1738 and 1748, respectively. And from the second decade of the 18th century on, a number of influential publications by Bernard de Montfaucon, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, the Comte de Caylus, and Robert Wood provided engraved views of Roman monuments and other antiquities and further quickened interest in the classical past. The new understanding distilled from these discoveries and publications in turn enabled European scholars for the first time to discern separate and distinct chronological periods in Greco-Roman art, and this new sense of a plurality of ancient styles replaced the older, unqualified veneration of Roman art and encouraged a dawning interest in purely Greek antiquities. The German scholar Johann Joachim Winckelmann's writings and sophisticated theorizings were especially influential in this regard. Winckelmann saw in Greek sculpture "a noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" and called for artists to imitate Greek art. He claimed that in doing so such artists would obtain idealized depictions of natural forms that had been stripped of all transitory and individualistic aspects, and their images would thus attain a universal and archetypal significance.

Neoclassicism as manifested in painting was initially not stylistically distinct from the French Rococo and other styles that had preceded it. This was partly because, whereas it was possible for architecture

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and sculpture to be modeled on prototypes in these media that had actually survived from classical antiquity, those few classical paintings that had survived were minor or merely ornamental works—until, that is, the discoveries made at Herculaneum and Pompeii. The earliest neoclassical painters were Joseph-Marie Vien, Anton Raphael Mengs, Pompeo Batoni, Angelica Kauffmann, and Gavin Hamilton; these artists were active during the 1750s, '60s, and '70s. Each of these painters, though they may have used poses and figural arrangements from ancient sculptures and vase paintings, was strongly influenced by preceding stylistic trends. An important early Neoclassical work such as Mengs's "Parnassus" owes much of its inspiration to 17th-century classicism and to Raphael for both the poses of its figures and its general composition. Many of the early paintings of the Neoclassical artist Benjamin West derive their compositions from works by Nicolas Poussin, and Kauffmann's sentimental subjects dressed in antique garb are basically Rococo in their softened, decorative prettiness. Mengs's close association with Winckelmann led to his being influenced by the ideal beauty that the latter so ardently expounded, but the church and palace ceilings decorated by Mengs owe more to existing Italian Baroque traditions than to anything Greek or Roman.

For the sake of convenience the Neoclassic period can be divided into three relatively coherent parts: the Restoration Age (1660-1700), in which Milton, Bunyan, and Dryden were the dominant influences; the Augustan Age (1700-1750), in which Pope was the central poetic figure, while Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett were presiding over the sophistication of the novel; and the Age of Johnson(1750-1798), which, while it was dominated and characterized by the mind and personality of the inimitable Dr. Samuel Johnson, whose sympathies were with the fading Augustan past, saw the beginnings of a new understanding and appreciation of the work of Shakespeare, the development, by Sterne and others, of the novel of sensibility, and the emergence of the Gothic school—attitudes which, in the context of the development of a cult of Nature, the influence of German romantic thought, religious tendencies like the rise of Methodism, and political events like the American and French revolutions—established the intellectual and emotional foundations of English Romanticism.

3.2 Romanticism

Romanticism was more widespread both in its origins and influence. No other intellectual/artistic movement has had comparable variety, reach, and staying power since the end of the Middle Ages.

Romanticism (or the Romantic Era/Period) was an artistic, literary and intellectual movement that originated in the second half of the 18th century in Europe, and gained strength in reaction to the Industrial Revolution. In part, it was a revolt against aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment and a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature.

Did u know? Romanticism was embodied most strongly in the visual arts, music, and literature, but had a major impact on historiography, education and natural history.

The movement validated strong emotion as an authentic source of aesthetic experience, placing new emphasis on such emotions as trepidation, horror and terror and awe—especially that which is experienced in confronting the sublimity of untamed nature and its picturesque qualities, both new aesthetic categories. It elevated folk art and ancient custom to something noble, made spontaneity a desirable characteristic (as in the musical impromptu), and argued for a "natural" epistemology of human activities as conditioned by nature in the form of language and customary usage.

Romanticism reached beyond the rational and Classicist ideal models to elevate a revived medievalism and elements of art and narrative perceived to be authentically medieval, in an attempt to escape the confines of population growth, urban sprawl, and industrialism, and it also attempted to embrace the exotic, unfamiliar, and distant in modes more authentic than Rococo chinoiserie, harnessing the power of the imagination to envision and to escape.

Notes

The modern sense of a romantic character may be expressed in Byronic ideals of a gifted, perhaps misunderstood loner, creatively following the dictates of his inspiration rather than the standard ways of contemporary society.

Although the movement was rooted in the German Sturm und Drang movement, which prized intuition and emotion over Enlightenment rationalism, the ideologies and events of the French Revolution laid the background from which both Romanticism and the Counter-Enlightenment emerged. The confines of the Industrial Revolution also had their influence on Romanticism, which was in part an escape from modern realities; indeed, in the second half of the 19th century, "Realism" was offered as a polarized opposite to Romanticism. Romanticism elevated the achievements of what it perceived as heroic individualists and artists, whose pioneering examples would elevate society. It also legitimized the individual imagination as a critical authority, which permitted freedom from classical notions of form in art. There was a strong recourse to historical and natural inevitability, a zeitgeist, in the representation of its ideas.

3.2.1 Characteristics

In a basic sense, the term "Romanticism" has been used to refer to certain artists, poets, writers, musicians, as well as political, philosophical and social thinkers of the late 18th and early to mid 19th centuries. It has equally been used to refer to various artistic, intellectual, and social trends of that era. Despite this general usage of the term, a precise characterization and specific definition of Romanticism have been the subject of debate in the fields of intellectual history and literary history throughout the 20th century, without any great measure of consensus emerging.

Arthur Lovejoy attempted to demonstrate the difficulty of defining Romanticism in his seminal article "On The Discrimination of Romanticisms" in his Essays in the History of Ideas (1948); some scholars see romanticism as essentially continuous with the present, some like Robert Hughes see in it the inaugural moment of modernity, some like Chateaubriand, 'Novalis' and Samuel Taylor Coleridge see it as the beginning of a tradition of resistance to Enlightenment rationalism—a 'Counter-Enlightenment'—to be associated most closely with German Romanticism. Still others place it firmly in the direct aftermath of the French Revolution. An earlier definition comes from Charles Baudelaire: "Romanticism is precisely situated neither in choice of subject nor exact truth, but in the way of feeling."

3.2.2 Counter-Enlightenment

Many intellectual historians have seen Romanticism as a key movement in the Counter-Enlightenment, a reaction against the Age of Enlightenment. Whereas the thinkers of the Enlightenment emphasized the primacy of reason, Romanticism emphasized intuition, imagination, and feeling, to a point that has led to some Romantic thinkers being accused of irrationalism.

Notes Romanticism focuses on Nature: a place free from society's judgment and restrictions. Romanticism blossomed after the age of Rationalism, a time that focused on scientific reasoning.

3.2.3 Genius, Originality and Authorship

The Romantic movement developed the idea of the absolute originality and artistic inspiration by the individual genius, which performs a "creation from nothingness;" this is the so-called Romantic ideology of literary authorship, which created the notion of plagiarism and the guilt of a derivativeness. This idea is often called "romantic originality." The romantic poets' turned their beliefs on originality into "the institution of originality." The English poet John Milton, who lived in the 17th century, was part of the origin of the concept.

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This idea was in contrast with the preceding artistic tradition, in which copying had been seen as a fundamental practice of the creative process; and has been especially challenged since the beginning of the 20th century, with the boom of the modernist and postmodern movements.

3.3 Romanticism and Music

Although the term "Romanticism" when applied to music has come to imply the period roughly from the 1820s until around 1900, the contemporary application of "romantic" to music did not coincide with this modern interpretation. In 1810 E.T.A. Hoffmann called Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven the three "Romantic Composers", and Ludwig Spohr used the term "good Romantic style" to apply to parts of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Technically, Mozart and Haydn are considered Classical composers, and by most standards, Beethoven represents the start of the musical Romantic period. By the early 20th century, the sense that there had been a decisive break with the musical past led to the establishment of the 19th century as "The Romantic Era", and it is referred to as such in the standard encyclopedias of music.

The traditional modern discussion of the music of Romanticism includes elements, such as the growing use of folk music, which are also directly related to the broader current of Romantic nationalism in the arts as well as aspects already present in 18th-century music, such as the cantabile accompanied melody to which Romantic composers beginning with Franz Schubert applied restless key modulations.

The heightened contrasts and emotions of Sturm und Drang (German for "turbulence and urge(ncy)") seem a precursor of the Gothic novel in literature, or the sanguinary elements of some of the operas of the period of the French Revolution. The libretti of Lorenzo da Ponte for Mozart's eloquent music convey a new sense of individuality and freedom. The romantic generation viewed Beethoven as their ideal of a heroic artist—a man who first dedicated a symphony to Consul Bonaparte as a champion of freedom and then challenged Emperor Napoleon by striking him out from the dedication of the Eroica Symphony. In Beethoven's Fidelio he creates the apotheosis of the 'rescue operas' which were another feature of French musical culture during the revolutionary period, in order to hymn the freedom which underlay the thinking of all radical artists in the years of hope after the Congress of Vienna.

3.3.1 Romantic Literature

In literature, Romanticism found recurrent themes in the evocation or criticism of the past, the cult of "sensibility" with its emphasis on women and children, the heroic isolation of the artist or narrator, and respect for a new, wilder, untrammeled and "pure" nature. Furthermore, several romantic authors, such as Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne, based their writings on the supernatural/occult and human psychology. Romanticism also helped in the emergence of new ideas and in the process led to the emergence of positive voices that were beneficial for the marginalized sections of the society.

The roots of romanticism in poetry go back to the time of Alexander Pope (1688–1744). Early pioneers include Joseph Warton (headmaster at Winchester College) and his brother Thomas Warton, professor of Poetry at Oxford University. Joseph maintained that invention and imagination were the chief qualities of a poet. The "poet's poet" Thomas Chatterton is generally considered to be the first Romantic poet in English. The Scottish poet James Macpherson influenced the early development of Romanticism with the international success of his Ossian cycle of poems published in 1762, inspiring both Goethe and the young Walter Scott.

An early German influence came from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whose 1774 novel The Sorrows of Young Werther had young men throughout Europe emulating its protagonist, a young artist

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with a very sensitive and passionate temperament. At that time Germany was a multitude of small separate states, and Goethe's works would have a seminal influence in developing a unifying sense of nationalism. Another philosophic influence came from the German idealism of Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Schelling, making Jena (where Fichte lived, as well as Schelling, Hegel, Schiller and the brothers Schlegel) a center for early German romanticism ("Jenaer Romantik"). Important writers were Ludwig Tieck, Novalis (Heinrich von Ofterdingen, 1799), Heinrich von Kleist and Friedrich Hölderlin. Heidelberg later became a center of German romanticism, where writers and poets such as Clemens Brentano, Achim von Arnim, and Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff met regularly in literary circles.

Important motifs in German Romanticism are travelling, nature, and ancient myths. The later German Romanticism of, for example, E. T. A. Hoffmann's Der Sandmann (The Sandman), 1817, and Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff's Das Marmorbild (The Marble Statue), 1819, was darker in its motifs and has gothic elements.

Early Russian Romanticism is associated with the writers Konstantin Batyushkov (A Vision on the Shores of the Lethe, 1809), Vasily Zhukovsky (The Bard, 1811; Svetlana, 1813) and Nikolay Karamzin (Poor Liza, 1792; Julia, 1796; Martha the Mayoress, 1802; The Sensitive and the Cold, 1803). However the principal exponent of Romanticism in Russia is Alexander Pushkin (The Prisoner of the Caucasus, 1820–1821; The Robber Brothers, 1822; Ruslan and Ludmila, 1820; Eugene Onegin, 1825–1832). Pushkin's work influenced many writers in the 19th century and led to his eventual recognition as Russia's greatest poet. Other Russian poets include Mikhail Lermontov (A Hero of Our Time, 1839), Fyodor Tyutchev (Silentium!, 1830), Yevgeny Baratynsky's (Eda, 1826), Anton Delvig, and Wilhelm Küchelbecker. Influenced heavily by Lord Byron, Lermontov sought to explore the Romantic emphasis on metaphysical discontent with society and self, while Tyutchev's poems often described scenes of nature or passions of love. Tyutchev commonly operated with such categories as night and day, north and south, dream and reality, cosmos and chaos, and the still world of winter and spring teeming with life. Baratynsky's style was fairly classical in nature, dwelling on the models of the previous century.

In Spain, the Romantic movement developed a well-known literature with a huge variety of poets and playwrights. The most important Spanish poet during this movement was José de Espronceda. After him there were other poets like Gustavo Adolfo Becquer, Mariano Jose de Larra and the dramatist José Zorrilla, author of Don Juan Tenorio. Before them may be mentioned the pre-romantics Jose Cadalso and Manuel José Quintana.

Spanish Romanticism also influenced regional literatures. For example, in Catalonia and in Galicia there was a national boom of writers in the local languages, like the Catalan Jacint Verdaguer and the Galician Rosalía de Castro, the main figures of the national revivalist movements Renaixença and Rexurdimento, respectively.

Brazilian Romanticism is characterized and divided in three different periods. The first one is basically focused in the creation of a sense of national identity, using the ideal of the heroic Indian. Some examples include José de Alencar, who wrote "Iracema" and "O Guarani", and Gonçalves Dias, renowned by the poem "Cançao do Exilio" (Song of the Exile). The second period is marked by a profound influence of European themes and traditions, involving the melancholy, sadness and despair related to unobtainable love. Goethe and Lord Byron are commonly quoted in these works. The third cycle is marked by social poetry, especially the abolitionist movement; the greatest writer of this period is Castro Alves.

Romanticism in British literature developed in a different form slightly later, mostly associated with the poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose co-authored book Lyrical Ballads (1798) sought to reject Augustan poetry in favour of more direct speech derived from folk traditions. Both poets were also involved in utopian social thought in the wake of the French

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Revolution. The poet and painter William Blake is the most extreme example of the Romantic sensibility in Britain, epitomised by his claim "I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's." Blake's artistic work is also strongly influenced by medieval illuminated books. The painters J. M. W. Turner and John Constable are also generally associated with Romanticism. Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley, John Keats and John Clare constitute another phase of Romanticism in Britain.

In predominantly Roman Catholic countries Romanticism was less pronounced than in Germany and Britain, and tended to develop later, after the rise of Napoleon. François-René de Chateaubriand is often called the "Father of French Romanticism". In France, the movement is associated with the 19th century, particularly in the paintings of Theodore Gericault and Eugene Delacroix, the plays, poems and novels of Victor Hugo, and the novels of Alexandre Dumas and Stendhal.

Modern Portuguese poetry definitely develops its outstanding character from the work of its Romantic epitome, Almeida Garrett, a very prolific writer who helped shape the genre with the masterpiece Folhas Caídas (1853). This late arrival of a truly personal Romantic style would linger on to the beginning of the 20th century, notably through the works of poets such as Cesário Verde and António Nobre, segueing seamlessly to Modernism. However, an early Portuguese expression of Romanticism is found already in the genius of Manuel Maria Barbosa du Bocage, especially in his sonnets dated at the end of the 18th century.

In the United States, romantic Gothic literature made an early appearance with Washington Irving's The Legend of Sleepy Hollow (1820) and Rip Van Winkle (1819), followed from 1823 onwards by the Leatherstocking Tales of James Fenimore Cooper, with their emphasis on heroic simplicity and their fervent landscape descriptions of an already-exotic mythicized frontier peopled by "noble savages", similar to the philosophical theory of Rousseau, exemplified by Uncas, from The Last of the Mohicans. There are picturesque "local color" elements in Washington Irving's essays and especially his travel books. Edgar Allan Poe's tales of the macabre and his balladic poetry were more influential in France than at home, but the romantic American novel developed fully in Nathaniel Hawthorne's atmosphere and melodrama. Later Transcendentalist writers such as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson still show elements of its influence and imagination, as does the romantic realism of Walt Whitman. The poetry of Emily Dickinson—nearly unread in her own time—and Herman Melville's novel Moby-Dick can be taken as epitomes of American Romantic literature. By the 1880s, however, psychological and social realism was competing with romanticism in the novel.

3.3.2 Nature

The subject of the relationship of Romanticism to nature is a vast one which can only be touched on here. There has hardly been a time since the earliest antiquity that Europeans did not celebrate nature in some form or other, but the attitudes toward nature common in the Western world today emerged mostly during the Romantic period. The Enlightenment had talked of "natural law" as the source of truth, but such law was manifest in human society and related principally to civic behavior. Unlike the Chinese and Japanese, Europeans had traditionally had little interest in natural landscapes for their own sake. Paintings of rural settings were usually extremely idealized: either well-tended gardens or tidy versions of the Arcadian myth of ancient Greece and Rome.

Here again, Rousseau is an important figure. He loved to go for long walks, Climb Mountains, and generally "commune with nature." His last work is called Les Reveries du promeneur solitaire. Europe had become more civilized, safer, and its citizens now felt freer to travel for the simple pleasure of it. Mountain passes and deep woods were no longer merely perilous hazards to be traversed, but awesome views to be enjoyed and pondered. The violence of ocean storms came to be appreciated as an esthetic object in any number of paintings, musical tone poems, and written descriptions, as in the opening of Goethe's Faust.

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None of this had been true of earlier generations, who had tended to view the human and the natural as opposite poles, with the natural sometimes exercising an evil power to degrade and dehumanize those who were to drawn to it. The Romantics, just as they cultivated sensitivity to emotion generally, especially cultivated sensitivity to nature. It came to be felt that to muse by a stream; to view a thundering waterfall or even confront a rolling desert could be morally improving. Much of the nature writing of the 19th century has a religious quality to it absent in any other period. This shift in attitude was to prove extremely powerful and long-lasting, as we see today in the love of Germans, Britons and Americans for wilderness.

It may seem paradoxical that it was just at the moment when the industrial revolution was destroying large tracts of woods and fields and creating an unprecedentedly artificial environment in Europe that this taste arose; but in fact it could probably have arisen in no other time. It is precisely people in urban environments aware of the stark contrast between their daily lives and the existence of the inhabitants of the wild who romanticise nature. They are attracted to it precisely because they are no longer unselfconsciously part of it. Faust, for instance, is powerfully drawn to the moonlit landscape outside his study at the beginning of Goethe's play largely because he is so discontented with the artificial world of learning in which he has so far lived.

3.4 Conceit

In literature, a conceit is an extended metaphor with a complex logic that governs a poetic passage or entire poem. By juxtaposing, usurping and manipulating images and ideas in surprising ways, a conceit invites the reader into a more sophisticated understanding of an object of comparison. Extended conceits in English are part of the poetic idiom of Mannerism, during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

Task What do you mean by the term conceit in literature?

3.4.1 Metaphysical Conceit

In English literature the term is generally associated with the 17th century metaphysical poets, an extension of contemporary usage. In the metaphysical conceit, metaphors have a much more purely conceptual, and thus tenuous, relationship between the things being compared. Helen Gardner observed that "a conceit is a comparison whose ingenuity is more striking than its justness" and that "a comparison becomes a conceit when we are made to concede likeness while being strongly conscious of unlikeness." An example of the latter would be George Herbert's "Praise," in which the generosity of God is compared to a bottle which will take in an infinite amount of the speaker's tears.

An often-cited example of the metaphysical conceit is the metaphor from John Donne's "The Flea", in which a flea that bites both the speaker and his lover becomes a conceit arguing that his lover has no reason to deny him sexually, although they are not married:

> Oh stay! three lives in one flea spare
>
> Where we almost, yea more than married are.
>
> This flea is you and I, and this
>
> Our marriage-bed and marriage-temple is.

When Sir Philip Sidney begins a sonnet with the conventional idiomatic expression "My true-love hath my heart and I have his", but then takes the metaphor literally and teases out a number of literal possibilities and extravagantly playful conceptions in the exchange of hearts, the result is a fully formed conceit.

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3.4.2 Petrarchan Conceit

The Petrarchan conceit, used in love poetry, exploits a particular set of images for comparisons with the despairing lover and his unpitying but idolized mistress. For instance, the lover is a ship on a stormy sea, and his mistress "a cloud of dark disdain"; or else the lady is a sun whose beauty and virtue shine on her lover from a distance.

The paradoxical pain and pleasure of lovesickness is often described using oxymoron, for instance uniting peace and war, burning and freezing, and so forth. But images which were novel in the sonnets of Petrarch became clichés in the poetry of later imitators. Romeo uses hackneyed Petrarchan conceits when describing his love for Rosaline as "bright smoke, cold fire, sick health".

3.5 Couplet

A couplet is a pair of lines of meter in poetry. It usually consists of two lines that rhyme and have the same meter. While traditionally couplets rhyme, not all do. A poem may use white space to mark out couplets if they do not rhyme. Couplets with a meter of iambic pentameter are called heroic couplets. The Poetic epigram is also in the couplet form.

Notes Couplets can also appear in more complex rhyme schemes. For example, Shakespearean sonnets end with a couplet.

Rhyming couplets are one of the simplest rhyme schemes in poetry. Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales are written in rhyming couplets. John Dryden in the 17th century and Alexander Pope in the 18th century were both well known for their writing in heroic couplets. They can be found in books such as midsummer nights dream.

Because the rhyme comes so quickly in rhyming couplets, it tends to call attention to itself. Good rhyming couplets tend to "snap" as both the rhyme and the idea come to a quick close in two lines. Here are some examples of rhyming couplets where the sense as well as the sound "rhymes":

True wit is nature to advantage dress'd;

What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd.

— Alexander Pope

Whether or not we find what we are seeking

is idle, biologically speaking.

— Edna St. Vincent Millay (at the end of a sonnet)

On the other hand, because rhyming couplets have such a predictable rhyme scheme, they can feel artificial and plodding. Here is a Pope parody of the predictable rhymes of his era:

Where-e'er you find "the cooling western breeze,"

In the next line, it "whispers through the trees;"

If crystal streams "with pleasing murmurs creep,"

The reader's threatened (not in vain) with "sleep."

3.6 Elegy

In literature, an elegy is a mournful, melancholic or plaintive poem, especially a funeral song or a lament for the dead. "Elegy" may denote a type of musical work, usually of a sad or somber nature.

Notes

The elegy began as an ancient Greek metrical form and is traditionally written in response to the death of a person or group. Though similar in function, the elegy is distinct from the epitaph, ode, and eulogy: the epitaph is very brief; the ode solely exalts; and the eulogy is most often written in formal prose.

The elements of a traditional elegy mirror three stages of loss. First, there is a lament, where the speaker expresses grief and sorrow, then praise and admiration of the idealized dead, and finally consolation and solace. These three stages can be seen in W. H. Auden's classic "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," written for the Irish master, which includes these stanzas:

With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.

Other well-known elegies include "Fugue of Death" by Paul Celan, written for victims of the Holocaust, and "O Captain! My Captain!" by Walt Whitman, written for President Abraham Lincoln.

Many modern elegies have been written not out of a sense of personal grief, but rather a broad feeling of loss and metaphysical sadness. A famous example is the mournful series of ten poems in Duino Elegies, by German poet Rainer Maria Rilke. The first poem begins:

If I cried out
who would hear me up there
among the angelic orders?

And suppose one suddenly
took me to his heart
I would shrivel.

Other works that can be considered elegiac in the broader sense are James Merrill's monumental The Changing Light at Sandover, Robert Lowell's "For the Union Dead," Seamus Heaney's The Haw Lantern, and the work of Czeslaw Milosz, which often laments the modern cruelties he witnessed in Europe.

Self Assessment

State the following sentences are True or False:

1. Romanticism was more widespread both in its origins and influence.
2. The english poet Geoffrey Chaucer, who lived in the 17th century was part of the origin of the concept.
3. Conceit is a pair of lines of meter in poetry.
4. Couplet consist of two lines that rhyme and have the same meter.
5. The epic began as an ancient Greek metrical form.

Notes

3.7 Epic

An epic is a lengthy narrative poem, ordinarily concerning a serious subject containing details of heroic deeds and events significant to a culture or nation. Oral poetry may qualify as an epic, and Albert Lord and Milman Parry have argued that classical epics were fundamentally an oral poetic form. Nonetheless, epics have been written down at least since the works of Virgil, Dante Alighieri, and John Milton. Many probably would not have survived if not written down. The first epics are known as primary, or original, epics. One such epic is the Old English story Beowulf. Epics that attempt to imitate these like Milton's Paradise Lost are known as literary, or secondary, epics. Another type of epic poetry is epyllion, which is a brief narrative poem with a romantic or mythological theme. The term, which means 'little epic', came into use in the nineteenth century. It refers primarily to the erudite, shorter hexameter poems of the Hellenistic period and the similar works composed at Rome from the age of the neoterics; to a lesser degree, the term includes some poems of the English Renaissance, particularly those influenced by Ovid. The most famous example of classical epyllion is perhaps Catullus 64.

Did u know? In the East, the most famous works of epic poetry are the Ramayana and Mahabharata, with the Iliad and the Odyssey, which form part of the Western canon, fulfilling the same function in the Western world.

3.7.1 Oral Epics or World Folk Epics

The first epics were products of preliterate societies and oral poetic traditions. In these traditions, poetry is transmitted to the audience and from performer to performer by purely oral means.

Early twentieth-century study of living oral epic traditions in the Balkans by Milman Parry and Albert Lord demonstrated the paratactic model used for composing these poems. What they demonstrated was that oral epics tend to be constructed in short episodes, each of equal status, interest and importance. This facilitates memorization, as the poet is recalling each episode in turn and using the completed episodes to recreate the entire epic as he performs it.

Task Is epic a lengthy narrative poem. Why?

Parry and Lord also showed that the most likely source for written texts of the epics of Homer was dictation from an oral performance.

Epic is a long narrative poem in elevated style presenting characters of high position in adventures forming an organic whole through their relation to a central heroic figure and through their development of episodes important to the history of a nation or race.

An attempt to deliminate nine main characteristics of an epic:

1. It opens in medias res.
2. The setting is vast, covering many nations, the world or the universe.
3. Begins with an invocation to a muse (epic invocation).
4. It starts with a statement of the theme.
5. Includes the use of epithets.
6. Contains long lists (epic catalogue).

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7. Features long and formal speeches.
8. Shows divine intervention on human affairs.
9. "Star" heroes that embody the values of the civilization.

The hero generally participates in a cyclical journey or quest, faces adversaries that try to defeat him in his journey and returns home significantly transformed by his journey.

The epic hero illustrates traits, performs deeds, and exemplifies certain morals that are valued by the society the epic originates from. Many epic heroes are recurring characters in the legends of their native culture.

3.7.2 Conventions of Epics

1. **Praepositio:** Opens by stating the theme or cause of the epic. This may take the form of a purpose (as in Milton, who proposed "to justify the ways of God to men"); of a question (as in the Iliad, which Homer initiates by asking a Muse to sing of Achilles' anger); or of a situation (as in the Song of Roland, with Charlemagne in Spain).
2. **Invocation:** Writer invokes a Muse, one of the nine daughters of Zeus. The poet prays to the Muses to provide him with divine inspiration to tell the story of a great hero. (This convention is obviously restricted to cultures influenced by European Classical culture. The Epic of Gilgamesh, for example, or the Bhagavata Purana would obviously not contain this element).
3. **In medias res:** narrative opens "in the middle of things", with the hero at his lowest point. Usually flashbacks show earlier portions of the story.
4. **Enumeratio:** Catalogues and genealogies are given. These long lists of objects, places, and people place the finite action of the epic within a broader, universal context. Often, the poet is also paying homage to the ancestors of audience members.
5. **Epithet:** Heavy use of repetition or stock phrases: *e.g.*, Homer's "rosy-fingered dawn" and "wine-dark sea."

3.8 Summary

- Neoclassicism is the name given to Western movements in the decorative and visual arts, literature, theatre, music, and architecture that draw inspiration from the "classical" art and culture of Ancient Greece or Ancient Rome.
- Romanticism was more widespread both in its origins and influence.
- In literature, Romanticism found recurrent themes in the evocation or criticism of the past, the cult of "sensibility" with its emphasis on women and children, the heroic isolation of the artist or narrator, and respect for a new, wilder, untrammeled and "pure" nature.
- The subject of the relationship of Romanticism to nature is a vast one which can only be touched on here.
- In literature, a conceit is an extended metaphor with a complex logic that governs a poetic passage or entire poem.

3.9 Keywords

Impetus **:** The force or energy with which a body moves.

Usurping **:** Illegally or by force.

Conceit **:** An elaborate metaphor or artistic effect.

Opera : A dramatic work in one or more acts that is set to music for singers and instrumentalists.

Eulogy : A speech or piece of writing that praises someone highly.

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3.10 Review Questions

1. Explain the term Neoclassicism.
2. What are the three divisions of Neoclassicism?
3. What is Romantic literature? Explain.
4. Describe the relationship of Romanticism to nature.
5. What do you mean by conceit in literature? Explain metaphysical conceit and petrarchan conceit.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. False

3.11 Further Readings

Books

A Glossary of Literary Terms — M.H.Abrams

Literary Terms: a practical glossary — Brian Moon

A Guide to Literary Terms — Gail Rae

A new handbook of Literary terms — David Mikics

Online links

http://www.uh.edu/engines/romanticism/introduction.html

http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/lit_terms/terms/Literary.Terms.html

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Unit 4: Major Literary Terms-III

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about figure of speech, heroic couplet, lyric, simile
- Know about iambic pentameter and metonymy
- Know about history and variations of heroic couplet.

Introduction

Literary elements refer to particular identifiable characteristics of a whole text. They are not "used," per se, by authors; they represent the elements of storytelling which are common to all literary and

narrative forms. For example, every story has a theme, every story has a setting, every story has a conflict, every story is written from a particular point-of-view, etc. In order to be discussed legitimately as part of a textual analysis, literary elements must be specifically identified for that particular text.

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4.1 Figure of Speech

A figure of speech is the use of a word or words diverging from its usual meaning. It can also be a special repetition, arrangement or omission of words with literal meaning, or a phrase with a specialized meaning not based on the literal meaning of the words in it, as in idiom, metaphor, simile, hyperbole, or personification. Figures of speech often provide emphasis, freshness of expression, or clarity. However, clarity may also suffer from their use, as any figure of speech introduces an ambiguity between literal and figurative interpretation. A figure of speech is sometimes called a rhetorical figure or a locution.

Not all theories of meaning have a concept of "literal language". Under theories that do not, figure of speech is not an entirely coherent concept.

Rhetoric originated as the study of the ways in which a source text can be transformed to suit the goals of the person reusing the material. For this goal, classical rhetoric detected four fundamental operations that can be used to transform a sentence or a larger portion of a text: expansion, abridgement, switching, and transferring.

The four fundamental operations or categories of change, governing the formation of all figures of speech are:

- addition (adiectio), also called repetition/expansion/superabundance
- omission (detractio), also called subtraction/abridgement/lack
- transposition (transmutatio), also called transferring
- permutation (immutatio), also called switching/interchange/substitution.

These four operations were detected by classical rhetoricians, and still serve to encompass the various figures of speech. Originally these were called, in Latin, the four operations of quadripartita ratio. The ancient surviving text mentioning them, although not recognizing them as the four fundamental principles, is the Rhetorica ad Herennium, of unknown authorship, where they are called (addition), (omission), (transposition) and (permutation). Quintillian then mentioned them in Institutio Oratoria. Philo of Alexandria also listed them as addition, subtraction, transposition, and transmutation.

Examples

The figure of speech comes in many varieties. The aim is to use the language inventively to accentuate the effect of what is being said. A few examples follow:

- "Round the rugged rocks the ragged rascal ran" is an example of alliteration, where the consonant r is used repeatedly. Whereas, "Sister Suzy sewing socks for soldiers" is a particular form of alliteration called sibilance, because it repeats the letter. Both are commonly used in poetry.
- "She would run up the stairs and then a new set of curtains" is a variety of zeugma called a syllepsis. Run up refers to ascending and also to manufacturing. The effect is enhanced by the momentary suggestion, through a pun, that she might be climbing up the curtains. The ellipsis or omission of the second use of the verb makes the reader think harder about what is being said.
- "Military Intelligence is an oxymoron" is the use of direct sarcasm to suggest that the military would have no intelligence. This might be considered to be a satire and a terse aphorism. "But he's a soldier, so he has to be an Einstein" is the use of sarcasm through irony for the same effect. The use of hyperbole by using the word Einstein calls attention to the ironic intent. An Einstein is an example of synechdoche, as it uses a particular name to represent a class of people: geniuses.

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- "I had butterflies in my stomach" is a metaphor, referring to my nervousness feeling as if there were flying insects in my stomach. To say "it was like having some butterflies in my stomach" would be a simile, because it uses the word like which is missing in the metaphor.

4.2 Heroic Couplet

A heroic couplet is a traditional form for English poetry, commonly used for epic and narrative poetry; it refers to poems constructed from a sequence of rhyming pairs of iambic pentameter lines. The rhyme is always masculine. Use of the heroic couplet was first pioneered by Geoffrey Chaucer in the Legend of Good Women and the Canterbury Tales. Chaucer is also widely credited with first extensive use of iambic pentameter.

Example

A frequently-cited example illustrating the use of heroic couplets is this passage from Cooper's Hill by John Denham, part of his description of the Thames:

> O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
>
> My great example, as it is my theme!
>
> Though deep yet clear, though gentle yet not dull;
>
> Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.

4.2.1 History

The term "heroic couplet" is sometimes reserved for couplets that are largely closed and self-contained, as opposed to the enjambed couplets of poets like John Donne. The heroic couplet is often identified with the English Baroque works of John Dryden and Alexander Pope. Major poems in the closed couplet, apart from the works of Dryden and Pope, are Samuel Johnson's The Vanity of Human Wishes, Oliver Goldsmith's The Deserted Village, and John Keats's Lamia. The form was immensely popular in the 18th century. The looser type of couplet, with occasional enjambment, was one of the standard verse forms in medieval narrative poetry, largely because of the influence of the Canterbury Tales.

4.2.2 Variations

English heroic couplets, especially in Dryden and his followers, are sometimes varied by the use of the occasional alexandrine, or hexameter line, and triplet. Often these two variations are used together to heighten a climax. The breaking of the regular pattern of rhyming pentameter pairs brings about a sense of poetic closure. Here are three examples from Book IV of Dryden's translation of the Aeneid.

Triplet

> Nor let him then enjoy supreme command;
>
> But fall, untimely, by some hostile hand,
>
> And lie unburied on the barren sand!
>
> (ll. 890-892)

Alexandrine

> Her lofty courser, in the court below,
>
> Who his majestic rider seems to know,

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Proud of his purple trappings, paws the ground,

And champs the golden bit, and spreads the foam around.

(ll. 190-193)

Alexandrine and Triplet

My Tyrians, at their injur'd queen's command,

Had toss'd their fires amid the Trojan band;

At once extinguish'd all the faithless name;

And I myself, in vengeance of my shame,

Had fall'n upon the pile, to mend the fun'ral flame.

(ll. 867-871)

4.3 Iambic Pentameter

Iambic pentameter is a commonly used metrical line in traditional verse and verse drama. The term describes the particular rhythm that the words establish in that line. That rhythm is measured in small groups of syllables; these small groups of syllables are called "feet". The word "iambic" describes the type of foot that is used (in English, an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable). The word "pentameter" indicates that a line has five of these "feet."

These terms originally applied to the quantitative meter of classical poetry. They were adopted to describe the equivalent meters in English accentual-syllabic verse. Different languages express rhythm in different ways. In Ancient Greek and Latin, the rhythm is created through the alternation of short and long syllables. In English, the rhythm is created through the use of stress, alternating between unstressed and stressed syllables. An English unstressed syllable is equivalent to a classical short syllable, while an English stressed syllable is equivalent to a classical long syllable. When a pair of syllables is arranged as a short followed by a long, or an unstressed followed by a stressed, pattern, that foot is said to be "iambic". The English word "trapeze" is an example of an iambic pair of syllables, since the word is made up of two syllables ("tra—peze") and is pronounced with the stress on the second syllable ("tra—**PEZE**", rather than "**TRA**—peze"). Iambic pentameter is a line made up of five such pairs of short/long, or unstressed/stressed, syllables.

Iambic rhythms come relatively naturally in English. Iambic pentameter is the most common meter in English poetry; it is used in many of the major English poetic forms, including blank verse, the heroic couplet, and some of the traditional rhymed stanza forms. William Shakespeare used iambic pentameter in his plays and sonnets.

Did u know? Iambic pentameter is meter that Shakespeare nearly always used when writing in verse. Most of his plays were written in iambic pentameter, except for lower-class characters who speak in prose.

4.3.1 Rhythmic Variations

In his plays, Shakespeare didn't always stick to ten syllables. He often played around with iambic pentameter to give color and feeling to his character's speeches. This is the key to understanding Shakespeare's language.

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4.3.2 Feminine Ending

Sometimes Shakespeare added an extra unstressed beat at the end of a line to emphasize a character's sense of contemplation. This variation is called a feminine ending and Hamlet's famous question is the perfect example:

To **be**, / or **not** / to **be:** / **that** is / the **ques-** / -tion

4.3.3 Inversion

Shakespeare also reverses the order of the stresses in some iambic to help emphasize certain words or ideas. If we look closely at the fourth iambus in the Hamlet quote above, we can see how he has placed an emphasis on the word "that" by inverting the stresses. Occasionally, Shakespeare will completely break the rules and place two stressed syllables in the same iambus, as the following quote from Richard III demonstrates:

Now is / the **win-** / -ter of / **our dis-** / con**tent**

In this example, the fourth iambus emphasizes that it is "our discontent," and the first iambus emphasizes that we are feeling this "now."

Why is Iambic Pentameter Important?

Shakespeare will always feature prominently in any discussion of iambic pentameter because he used the form with great dexterity-especially in his sonnets, but you must not be tricked into thinking that he invented it. Rather, it is a standard literary convention that has been used by many writers before and after Shakespeare. Historians are not sure how the speeches were read aloud-whether delivered naturally or with an emphasis on the stressed words. In my opinion, this is unimportant. What really matters is that the study of iambic pentameter gives us a rare glimpse into the inner workings of Shakespeare's writing process.

4.4 Lyric

Lyrics (in singular form lyric) are a set of words that make up a song. The writer of lyrics is a lyricist or lyrist. The meaning of lyrics can either be explicit or implicit. Some lyrics are abstract, almost unintelligible, and, in such cases, their explication emphasizes form, articulation, meter, and symmetry of expression. The lyricist of traditional musical forms such as Opera is known as a librettist.

Notes Lyric derives from the Greek word, meaning "singing to the lyre". A lyric poem is one that expresses a subjective, personal point of view.

The word lyric came to be used for the "words of a song"; this meaning was recorded in 1876. The common plural, predominates contemporary usage. Use of the singular form lyric to refer to a song's complete set of words is grammatically acceptable. However it's not considered acceptable to refer to a singular word in a song as a lyric.

Lyric poetry is a genre of poetry that expresses personal and emotional feelings. In the ancient world, lyric poems were those which were sung to the lyre. Lyric poems do not have to rhyme, and today do not need to be set to music or a beat. Aristotle, in Poetics 1447a, mentions lyric poetry

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along with drama, epic poetry, dancing, painting and other forms of mimesis. The lyric poem, dating from the Romantic era, does have some thematic antecedents in ancient Greek and Roman verse, but the ancient definition was based on metrical criteria, and in archaic and classical Greek culture presupposed live performance accompanied by a stringed instrument.

4.4.1 Forms of Lyrics

Although arguably the most popular form of lyric poetry in the Western tradition is the 14-line sonnet, either in its Petrarchan or its Shakespearean form, lyric poetry appears in a variety of forms. Other forms of the lyric include ballades, villanelles, odes, pastourelle and canzone.

Ancient Hebrew poetry relied on repetition, alliteration, and chiasmus for many of its effects. Ancient Greek and Roman lyric poetry was composed in strophes. Pindar's epinician odes, where strophe and antistrophe are followed by an epode, represent an expansion of the same basic principle. The Greeks distinguished, however, between lyric monody (e.g. Sappho, Anacreon) and choral lyric (e.g. Pindar, Bacchylides). In all such poetry the fundamental formal feature is the repetition of a metrical pattern larger than a verse or distich. In some cases (although not in antiquity), form and theme are wed in the conception of a genre, as in the medieval alva or aubade, a dawn song in which lovers must part after a night of love, often with the watchman's refrain telling them it is time to go. A common feature of some lyric forms is the refrain of one or more verses that end each strophe. The refrain is repeated throughout the poem, either exactly or with variation. In the medieval Galician-Portuguese cantigas de amigo, thought to reflect an old oral tradition, 90% of the texts have a refrain.

Task What do you mean by the term lyric? List the common meters.

Much lyric poetry depends on regular meter based either on number of syllables or on stress. The most common meters are as follows:

- Iambic—Two syllables, with the short or unstressed syllable followed by the long or stressed syllable.
- Trochaic—Two syllables, with the long or stressed syllable followed by the short or unstressed syllable. In English, this metre is found almost entirely in lyric poetry.
- Pyrrhic—Two unstressed syllables
- Anapestic—Three syllables, with the first two short or unstressed and the last long or stressed.
- Dactylic—Three syllables, with the first one long or stressed and the other two short or unstressed.
- Spondaic—Two syllables, with two successive long or stressed syllables.

Some forms have a combination of meters, often using a different meter for the refrain.

4.5 Simile

A simile is a figure of speech that directly compares two different things, usually by employing the words "like", "as", or "than". Even though both similes and metaphors are forms of comparison, similes indirectly compare the two ideas and allow them to remain distinct in spite of their similarities, whereas metaphors compare two things directly. For instance, a simile that compares a person with a

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bullet would go as follows: "Chris was a record-setting runner as fast as a speeding bullet." A metaphor might read something like, "When Chris ran, he was a speeding bullet racing along the track."

A mnemonic for a simile is that "a simile is similar or alike."

4.5.1 In Literature

Similes have been widely used in literature for their expressiveness as a figure of speech:

- Curley was flopping like a fish on a line.
- The very mist on the Essex marshes was like a gauzy and radiant fabric.
- Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world like a Colossus. Dickens, in the opening to 'A Christmas Carol', says "But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile."

4.5.2 Explicit Similes

A simile can explicitly provide the basis of a comparison or leave this basis implicit. For instance, the following similes are implicit, leaving an audience to determine for themselves which features are being predicated of a target:

- She is like a dynamo.
- For he is like a refiner's fire.

More detail is present in the following similes, but it is still a matter of inference as to what features are actually predicated of the target:

- He fights like a lion.
- She swims like a dolphin.
- He slithers like a snake.
- He runs like a cheetah.
- He drinks like a fish.
- She kicks like a mule.
- He flopped like a fish out of water.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. A ..... is a traditional form for english poetry.
2. The heroic couplet was first pioneered by ..... .
3. ..... is commonly used metrical line in traditional verse and verse drama.
4. ..... rhythms come relatively naturally in english.
5. ..... is a figure of speech used in rhetoric.

4.6 Metonymy

Metonymy is a figure of speech used in rhetoric in which a thing or concept is not called by its own name, but by the name of something intimately associated with that thing or concept. For instance, "Hollywood" is used as a metonym (an instance of metonymy) for American cinema, because of the fame and cultural identity of Hollywood, California as the historical center of movie studios and

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movie stars. Another example is "Westminster," which is used as a metonym for the Parliament of the United Kingdom, because it is located there.

Cognitive science and linguistics for metaphor and metonymy

Metonymy works by the contiguity (association) between two concepts, whereas metaphor works by the similarity between them. When people use metonymy, they do not typically wish to transfer qualities from one referent to another as they do with metaphor: there is nothing press-like about reporters or crown-like about a monarch, but "the press" and "the crown" are both common metonyms.

Two examples using the term "fishing" help make the distinction better. The phrase "to fish pearls" uses metonymy, drawing from "fishing" the idea of taking things from the ocean. What is carried across from "fishing fish" to "fishing pearls" is the domain of metonymy.

In contrast, the metaphorical phrase "fishing for information" transfers the concept of fishing into a new domain. If someone is "fishing" for information, we do not imagine that he or she is anywhere near the ocean; rather, we transpose elements of the action of fishing into a new domain thus, metonymy works by calling up a domain of usage and an array of associations, whereas metaphor picks a target set of meanings and transfers them to a new domain of usage.

4.7 Summary

- A figure of speech is the use of a word or words diverging from its usual meaning.
- Figures of speech often provide emphasis, freshness of expression, or clarity.
- The term "heroic couplet" is sometimes reserved for couplets that are largely closed and self-contained.
- Iambic pentameter is a commonly used metrical line in traditional verse and verse drama.
- Metonymy is a figure of speech used in rhetoric in which a thing or concept is not called by its own name.

4.8 Keywords

Ambiguity : Open to more than one interpretation.

Accentual : A particular way of pronouncing a language.

Couplet : A pair of successive lines of verse.

Metaphor : A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable.

Monarch : A sovereign head of state.

4.9 Review Questions

1. Describe the significant features of figure of speech.
2. Write short note on simile and heroic couplet.
3. Explain the term lyric and forms of lyric.
4. What is an iambic pentameter? Explain.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. Heroic couplet
2. Geoffrey Chaucer
3. Iambic pentameter
4. Iambic
5. Metonymy

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4.10 Further Readings

Books

A Glossary of Literary Terms — M.H.Abrams
Literary Terms: a practical glossary — Brian Moon
A Guide to Literary Terms — Gail Rae
A new handbook of Literary terms — David Mikics

Online links

http://www.christianleadershipcenter.org/616/fospeech.htm
http://iambicpentameter.net/

Unit 5: Major Literary Terms-IV

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the term synecdoche
- Know about meter in poetry
- Explain the term ode, pastoral poetry, personification
- Discuss the term rhyme, types of rhyme and sonnet.

Introduction

Literary techniques refers to any specific, deliberate constructions or choices of language which an author uses to convey meaning in a particular way. An author's use of a literary technique usually occurs with a single word or phrase, or a particular group of words or phrases, at one single point in a text. Unlike literary elements, literary techniques are not necessarily present in every text; they represent deliberate, conscious choices by individual authors.

5.1 Synecdoche

Synecdoche, wherein a specific part of something is used to refer to the whole, is usually understood as a specific kind of metonymy. Sometimes, however, people make an absolute distinction between a metonym and a synecdoche, treating metonymy as different from rather than inclusive of synecdoche. There is a similar problem with the usage of simile and metaphor.

Synecdoche is closely related to metonymy, the figure of speech in which a term denoting one thing is used to refer to a related thing; indeed, synecdoche is sometimes considered a subclass of metonymy. It is more distantly related to other figures of speech, such as metaphor.

More rigorously, metonymy and synecdoche may be considered as sub-species of metaphor, intending metaphor as a type of conceptual substitution. In Lanham's Handlist of Rhetorical Terms, the three terms have somewhat restrictive definitions, arguably in tune with a certain interpretation of their etymologies from Greek:

- Metaphor: changing a word from its literal meaning to one not properly applicable but analogous to it; assertion of identity rather than, as with simile, likeness.
- Metonymy: substitution of cause for effect, proper name for one of its qualities, etc.
- Synecdoche: substitution of a part for whole, species for genus, etc.

The use of synecdoche is a common way to emphasize an important aspect of a fictional character; for example, a character might be consistently described by a single body part, such as the eyes, which come to represent the character. This is often used when the main character does not know or care about the names of the characters that he is referring to.

Also, sonnets and other forms of love poetry frequently use synecdoches to characterize the beloved in terms of individual body parts rather than a whole, coherent self. This practice is especially common in the Petrarchan sonnet, where the idealised beloved is often described part by part, from head to toe.

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Task What is a poem with an example of synecdoche and metonymy?

One example of a simple sentence that displays synecdoche, metaphor, and metonymy is: "Fifty keels ploughed the deep", where "keels" is the synecdoche, as it names the whole (the ship) after a particular part (of the ship); "ploughed" is the metaphor, as it substitutes the concept of ploughing a field for moving through the ocean; and "the deep" is the metonym, as "depth" is an attribute associated with the ocean.

5.2 Meter

In poetry, meter is the basic rhythmic structure of a verse or lines in verse. Many traditional verse forms prescribe a specific verse meter, or a certain set of meters alternating in a particular order. The study of meters and forms of versification is known as prosody. Within linguistics, "prosody" is used in a more general sense that includes not only poetical meter but also the rhythmic aspects of prose, whether formal or informal, which vary from language to language, and sometimes between poetic traditions.

5.2.1 Qualitative vs. Quantitative Meter

The meter of much poetry of the Western world and elsewhere is based on particular patterns of syllables of particular types. The familiar type of meter in English language poetry is called qualitative meter, with stressed syllables coming at regular intervals (*e.g.* in iambic pentameter, typically every even-numbered syllable). Many Romance languages use a scheme that is somewhat similar but where the position of only one particular stressed syllable (*e.g.,* the last) needs to be fixed.

Notes The meter of the old Germanic poetry of languages such as Old Norse and Old English was radically different, but still was based on stress patterns.

Many classical languages, however, use a different scheme known as quantitative meter, where patterns are based on syllable weight rather than stress. In dactylic hexameter of Classical Latin and Classical Greek, for example, each of the six feet making up the line was either a dactyl (long-short-short) or spondee (long-long), where a long syllable was literally one that took longer to pronounce than a short syllable: specifically, a syllable consisting of a long vowel or diphthong or followed by two consonants. The stress pattern of the words made no difference to the meter. A number of other ancient languages also used quantitative meter, such as Sanskrit and Classical Arabic.

5.2.2 Old English

The metric system of Old English poetry was different from that of modern English, and more related to the verse forms of most of older Germanic languages. It used alliterative verse, a metrical pattern involving varied numbers of syllables but a fixed number (usually four) of strong stresses in each line. The unstressed syllables were relatively unimportant, but the caesurae played a major role in Old English poetry.

5.2.3 Modern English

Most English metre is classified according to the same system as Classical metre with an important difference. English is an accentual language, and therefore beats and offbeats (stressed and unstressed

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syllables) take the place of the long and short syllables of classical systems. In most English verse, the metre can be considered as a sort of back beat, against which natural speech rhythms vary expressively. The most common characteristic feet of English verse are the iamb in two syllables and the anapest in three.

5.2.4 Metrical Systems

The number of metrical systems in English is not agreed upon. The four major types are: accentual verse, accentual-syllabic verse, syllabic verse and quantitative verse. The alliterative verse of Old English could also be added to this list, or included as a special type of accentual verse. Accentual verse focuses on the number of stresses in a line, while ignoring the number of offbeats and syllables; accentual-syllabic verse focuses on regulating both the number of stresses and the total number of syllables in a line; syllabic verse only counts the number of syllables in a line; quantitative verse regulates the patterns of long and short syllables (this sort of verse is often considered alien to English). It is to be noted, however, that the use of foreign metres in English is all but exceptional.

5.2.5 Frequently Used Metres

The most frequently encountered metre of English verse is the iambic pentameter, in which the metrical norm is five iambic feet per line, though metrical substitution is common and rhythmic variations practically inexhaustible. John Milton's Paradise Lost, most sonnets, and much else besides in English are written in iambic pentameter. Lines of unrhymed iambic pentameter are commonly known as blank verse. Blank verse in the English language is most famously represented in the plays of William Shakespeare and the great works of Milton, though Tennyson (Ulysses, The Princess) and Wordsworth (The Prelude) also make notable use of it.

A rhymed pair of lines of iambic pentameter make a heroic couplet, a verse form which was used so often in the eighteenth century that it is now used mostly for humorous effect (although see Pale Fire for a non-trivial case). The most famous writers of heroic couplets are Dryden and Pope.

Another important metre in English is the ballad metre, also called the "common metre", which is a four-line stanza, with two pairs of a line of iambic tetrameter followed by a line of iambic trimeter; the rhymes usually fall on the lines of trimeter, although in many instances the tetrameter also rhymes. This is the metre of most of the Border and Scots or English ballads. In hymnody it is called the "common metre", as it is the most common of the named hymn metres used to pair many hymn lyrics with melodies, such as Amazing Grace:

Amazing Grace! how sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me;

I once was lost, but now am found;

Was blind, but now I see.

Emily Dickinson is famous for her frequent use of ballad metre:

Great streets of silence led away

To neighborhoods of pause —

Here was no notice — no dissent —

No universe — no laws.

5.3 Ode

Ode is a type of lyrical verse. A classic ode is structured in three major parts: the strophe, the antistrophe, and the epode. Different forms such as the homostrophic ode and the irregular ode also exist. It is an

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elaborately structured poem praising or glorifying an event or individual, describing nature intellectually as well as emotionally.

Greek odes were originally poetic pieces accompanied by symphonic orchestras. As time passed on, they gradually became known as personal lyric compositions whether sung or recited (with or without accompanied music). For some, the primary instrument of choice was either the aulos or the lyre (the most revered instrument of the Ancient Greeks). The written ode, as it was practiced by the Romans, returned to the lyrical form of the Lesbian lyricists.

There are three typical forms of odes: the Pindaric, Horatian, and irregular. Pindaric odes follow the form and style of Pindar. Horatian odes follow conventions of Horace; the odes of Horace deliberately imitated the Greek lyricists such as Alcaeus and Anacreon. Odes by Catullus, as well as other poetry of Catullus, was particularly inspired by Sappho. Irregular odes are rhyming, but they do not employ the three-part form of the Pindaric ode nor the two-or four-line stanza of the Horatian ode.

5.3.1 English Ode

An ode is typically a lyrical verse written in praise of, or dedicated to someone or something which captures the poet's interest or serves as an inspiration for the ode. The initial model for English odes was Horace, who used the form to write meditative lyrics on various themes. The earliest odes in the English language, using the word in its strict form, were the Epithalamium and Prothalamium of Edmund Spenser.

In the 17th century the most important original odes in English are those of Abraham Cowley and Andrew Marvell. Marvell, in his Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland uses a regular form (two four-foot lines followed by two three-foot lines) modelled on Horace, while Cowley wrote "Pindarique" odes which had irregular patterns of line lengths and rhyme schemes, though they were iambic. The principle of Cowley's Pindariques was based on a misunderstanding of Pindar's metrical practice but was widely imitated nonetheless, with notable success by John Dryden. The English ode's most common rhyme scheme is ABABCDECDE.

5.4 Pastoral

Pastoral is a mode of literature in which the author employs various techniques to place the complex life into a simple one. Paul Alpers distinguishes pastoral as a mode rather than a genre, and he bases this distinction on the recurring attitude of power; that is to say that pastoral literature holds a humble perspective toward nature. Thus, pastoral as a mode occurs in many types of literature (poetry, drama, etc.) as well as genres (most notably the pastoral elegy).

Gifford defines pastoral in three ways. The first way emphasizes the historical literary perspective of the pastoral in which authors recognize and discuss life in the country and in particular the life of a shepherd. This is summed up by Leo Marx with the phrase "No shepherd, no pastoral". The second type of the pastoral is literature that "describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban". The third type of pastoral depicts the country life with derogative classifications.

Traditionally, pastoral refers to the lives of herdsmen in a romanticized, exaggerated, but representative way. In literature, the adjective 'pastoral' refers to rural subjects and aspects of life in the countryside among shepherds, cowherds and other farm workers that are often romanticized and depicted in a highly unrealistic manner. The pastoral life is usually characterized as being closer to the Golden age than the rest of human life. The setting is a Locus Amoenus, or a beautiful place in nature, sometimes connected with images of the Garden of Eden. An example of the use of the genre is the short poem Robene and Makyne which also contains the conflicted emotions often present in the genre. A more tranquil mood is set by Christopher Marlowe's well known lines from The Passionate Shepherd to His Love:

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Come live with me and be my Love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dale and field,
And all the craggy mountains yield.
There will we sit upon the rocks
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

"The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" exhibits the concept of Gifford's second definition of pastoral. The speaker of the poem, who is the titled shepherd, draws on the idealization of urban material pleasures to win over his love rather than resorting to the simplified pleasures of pastoral ideology. This can be seen in the listed items: "lined slippers," "purest gold," "silver dishes," and "ivory table" (lines 13, 15, 16, 21, 23). The speaker takes on a voyeuristic point of view with his love, and they are not directly interacting with the other true shepherds and nature.

Pastoral shepherds and maidens usually have Greek names like Corydon or Philomela, reflecting the origin of the pastoral genre. Pastoral poems are set in beautiful rural landscapes, the literary term for which is "locus amoenus" (Latin for "beautiful place"), such as Arcadia, a rural region of Greece, mythological home of the god Pan, which was portrayed as a sort of Eden by the poets. The tasks of their employment with sheep and other rustic chores is held in the fantasy to be almost wholly undemanding and is left in the background, abandoning the shepherdesses and their swains in a state of almost perfect leisure. This makes them available for embodying perpetual erotic fantasies. The shepherds spend their time chasing pretty girls—or, at least in the Greek and Roman versions, pretty lads as well. The eroticism of Virgil's second eclogue, Formosum pastor Corydon ardebat Alexin ("The shepherd Corydon burned with passion for pretty Alexis") is entirely homosexual, although the use of that term is anachronistic due to a lack of any idea of sexual identity in the times in which Virgil was writing.

5.4.1 Pastoral Poetry

Pastoral literature continued after Hesiod with the poetry of the Hellenistic Greek Theocritus, several of whose Idylls are set in the countryside and involve dialogues between herdsmen. Theocritus may have drawn on authentic folk traditions of Sicilian shepherds. He wrote in the Doric dialect but the metre he chose was the dactylic hexameter associated with the most prestigious form of Greek poetry, epic. This blend of simplicity and sophistication would play a major part in later pastoral verse. Theocritus was imitated by the Greek poets Bion and Moschus.

Task How do you write a pastoral poetry?

5.4.2 Pastoral Epic

Milton is perhaps best known for his epic "Paradise Lost", one of the few Pastoral epics ever written. A notable part of Paradise Lost is book IV where he chronicles Satan's trespass into paradise. Milton's iconic descriptions of the garden are shadowed by the fact that we see it from Satan's perspective and are thus led to commiserate with him. Milton elegantly works through a presentation of Adam and Eve's pastorally idyllic, eternally fertile living conditions and focuses upon their stewardship of the garden. He gives much focus to the fruit bearing trees and Adam and Eve's care of them, sculpting an

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image of pastoral harmony. However, Milton in turn continually comes back to Satan, constructing him as a character the audience can easily identify with and perhaps even like. Milton creates Satan as character meant to destabilize the audience's understanding of themselves and the world around them. Through this mode, Milton is able to create a working dialogue between the text and his audience about the 'truths' they hold for themselves.

5.5 Personification

Personification is giving human qualities to animals or objects. Personification is a figure of speech in which the poet describes an abstraction, a thing, or a nonhuman form as if it were a person. William Blake's "O Rose, thou art sick!", is one example; Donne's "Death, be not proud" is another. Gregory Corso quarrels with a series of personified abstractions in his poem "The Whole Mess . . . Almost." Personification is often used in symbolic or allegorical poetry; for instance, the virtue of Justice takes the form of the knight Artegal in Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene.

Personification - a figure of speech in which abstractions, animals, ideas, and inanimate objects are endowed with human form, character, traits, or sensibilities. An entirely imaginary creature or person also may be conceived of as representing an idea or object. Like a metaphor, personification is a frequent resource in poetry.

A colloquial example of personification is when one refers to a ship as "she." Another example of personification is "the wind shrieked through the window."

Example:

A smiling moon, a jovial sun

In "Mirror" by Sylvia Plath, for example, the mirror—the "I" in the first line—is given the ability to speak, see and swallow, as well as human attributes such as truthfulness.

I am silver and exact.

I have no preconceptions.

Whatever I see I swallow immediately

Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.

I am not cruel, only truthful—

In John Keats' "To Autumn," the fall season is personified as "sitting careless on a granary floor" (line 14) and "drowsed with the fume of poppies" (line 17.)

5.6 Rhyme

A rhyme is a repetition of similar sounds in two or more words and is most often used in poetry and songs. The word "rhyme" may also refer to a short poem, such as a rhyming couplet or other brief rhyming poem such as nursery rhymes.

In a perfect rhyme the last stressed vowel and all following sounds are identical in both words. If the sound preceding the stressed vowel is also identical, the rhyme is sometimes considered to be inferior and not a perfect rhyme after all. An example of such a "super-rhyme" or "more than perfect rhyme" is the "identical rhyme", in which not only the vowels but also the onsets of the rhyming syllables are identical, as in gun and begun. Punning rhymes such are "bare" and "bear" are also identical rhymes. The rhyme may of course extend even farther back than the last stressed vowel. If it extends all the way to the beginning of the line, so that there are two lines that sound identical, then it is called a "holorhyme".

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5.6.1 Types of Rhyme

The word rhyme can be used in a specific and a general sense. In the specific sense, two words rhyme if their final stressed vowel and all following sounds are identical; two lines of poetry rhyme if their final strong positions are filled with rhyming words. A rhyme in the strict sense is also called a perfect rhyme. Examples are sight and flight, deign and gain, madness and sadness.

5.6.2 Perfect Rhymes

Perfect rhymes can be classified according to the number of syllables included in the rhyme, which is dictated by the location of the final stressed syllable.

- **Masculine:** a rhyme in which the stress is on the final syllable of the words (rhyme, sublime).
- **Feminine:** a rhyme in which the stress is on the penultimate (second from last) syllable of the words (picky, tricky).
- **Dactylic:** a rhyme in which the stress is on the antepenultimate (third from last) syllable (cacophonies, Aristophanes).

5.6.3 General Rhymes

In the general sense, general rhyme can refer to various kinds of phonetic similarity between words, and to the use of such similar-sounding words in organizing verse. Rhymes in this general sense are classified according to the degree and manner of the phonetic similarity:

- **Syllabic:** a rhyme in which the last syllable of each word sounds the same but does not necessarily contain vowels. (cleaver, silver, or pitter, patter).
- **Imperfect:** a rhyme between a stressed and an unstressed syllable. (wing, caring).
- **Semirhyme:** a rhyme with an extra syllable on one word. (bend, ending).
- **Oblique (or slant/forced):** a rhyme with an imperfect match in sound. (green, fiend; one, thumb).
- **Assonance:** matching vowels. (sh**a**ke, h**a**te) Assonance is sometimes used to refer to slant rhymes.
- **Consonance:** matching consonants. (**r**a**b**i**e**s, **r**o**bb**e**r**s).
- **Half Rhyme** (or **sprung rhyme**): matching final consonants. (be**nt**, a**nt**).
- **Alliteration** (or **head rhyme**): matching initial consonants. (**sh**ort, **sh**ip).

A rhyme is not classified as a rhyme if one of the words being rhymed is the entirety of the other word (for example, Ball and all).

5.6.4 Eye Rhyme

Eye rhymes or sight rhymes refer to similarity in spelling but not in sound, as with cough, bough, or love, move. These are not rhymes in the strict sense, but often were in earlier language periods.

5.6.5 Mind Rhyme

Mind Rhyme is a kind of substitution rhyme similar to rhyming slang, but it is less generally codified and is "heard" only when generated by a specific verse context. For instance, "this sugar is neat / and tastes so sour." If a reader or listener thinks of the word "sweet" instead of "sour", then a mind rhyme has occurred.

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5.6.6 Classification by Position

The preceding classification has been based on the nature of the rhyme; but we may also classify rhymes according to their position in the verse:

- Tail rhyme is also called end rhyme: a rhyme in the final syllable(s) of a verse (the most common kind)
- When a word at the end of the line rhymes with a word in the interior of the line, it is called an internal rhyme.
- Holorhyme has already been mentioned, by which not just two individual words, but two entire lines rhyme.

A rhyme scheme is the pattern of rhyming lines in a poem. Internal rhyme is rhyme which occurs within a single line of verse.

- A form of verisimilitude often invoked in fantasy and science fiction invites readers to pretend such stories are true by referring to objects of the mind such as fictional books or years that do not exist apart from an imaginary world.

Imagination in this sense, not being limited to the acquisition of exact knowledge by the requirements of practical necessity, is, up to a certain point, free from objective restraints. The ability to imagine one's self in another person's place is very important to social relations and understanding.

Did u know? Albert Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world." But in reality, without knowledge, imagination cannot be developed.

In various spheres, however, even imagination is in practice limited: thus a person whose imaginations do violence to the elementary laws of thought, or to the necessary principles of practical possibility, or to the reasonable probabilities of a given case is regarded as insane.

The same limitations beset imagination in the field of scientific hypothesis. Progress in scientific research is due largely to provisional explanations which are developed by imagination, but such hypotheses must be framed in relation to previously ascertained facts and in accordance with the principles of the particular science.

5.7 Sonnet

The sonnet is one of several forms of poetry originating in Europe, mainly Great Britain and Italy, and commonly has 14 lines. The term "sonnet" derives from the Occitan word sonet and the Italian word sonetto, both meaning "little song" or "little sound". By the thirteenth century, it had come to signify a poem of fourteen lines that follows a strict rhyme scheme and specific structure. The conventions associated with the sonnet have evolved over its history. The writers of sonnets are sometimes referred to as "sonneteers," although the term can be used derisively. One of the best-known sonnet writers is William Shakespeare, who wrote 154 of them (not including those that appear in his plays). A Shakespearean, or English, sonnet consists of 14 lines, each line containing ten syllables and written in iambic pentameter, in which a pattern of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable is repeated five times.

Did u know? The rhyme scheme in a Shakespearean sonnet is *a-b-a-b*, *c-d-c-d*, *e-f-e-f*, *g-g*; the last two lines are a rhyming couplet.

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Traditionally, English poets employ iambic pentameter when writing sonnets, but not all English sonnets have the same metrical structure: the first sonnet in Sir Philip Sidney's sequence Astrophel and Stella, for example, has 12 syllables: it is iambic hexameters, albeit with a turned first foot in several lines. In the Romance languages, the hendecasyllable and Alexandrine are the most widely used metres.

5.7.1 Italian (Petrarchan) Sonnet

The Italian sonnet was created by Giacomo da Lentini, head of the Sicilian School under Frederick II. Guittone d'Arezzo rediscovered it and brought it to Tuscany where he adapted it to his language when he founded the Neo-Sicilian School (1235–1294). He wrote almost 250 sonnets. Other Italian poets of the time, including Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) and Guido Cavalcanti (c. 1250–1300) wrote sonnets, but the most famous early sonneteer was Petrarca (known in English as Petrarch). Other fine examples were written by Michelangelo.

The structure of a typical Italian sonnet of this time included two parts which together formed a compact form of "argument". First, the octave (two quatrains), forms the "proposition" which describes a "problem", followed by a sestet (two tercets), which proposes a resolution. Typically, the ninth line creates what is called the "turn" or "volta" which acts to signal the move from proposition to resolution. Even in sonnets that don't strictly follow the problem/resolution structure, the ninth line still often marks a "turn" by signaling a change in the tone, mood, or stance of the poem.

In the sonnets of Giacomo da Lentini, the octave rhymed *a-b-a-b*, *a-b-a-b*; later, the *a-b-b-a*, *a-b-b-a* pattern became the standard for Italian sonnets. For the sestet there were two different possibilities: *c-d-e-c-d-e* and *c-d-c-c-d-c*. In time, other variants on this rhyming scheme were introduced such as *c-d-c-d-c-d*.

The first known sonnets in English, written by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, used this Italian scheme, as did sonnets by later English poets including John Milton, Thomas Gray, William Wordsworth and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Early twentieth-century American poet Edna St. Vincent Millay also wrote most of her sonnets using the Italian form.

This example, "On His Blindness" by Milton gives a sense of the Italian rhyming scheme;

When I consider how my light is spent (a)
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide, (b)
And that one talent which is death to hide, (b)
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent (a)
To serve therewith my Maker, and present (a)
My true account, lest he returning chide; (b)
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?" (b)
I fondly ask; but Patience to prevent (a)
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need (c)
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best (d)
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state (e)
Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed (c)
And post o'er land and ocean without rest; (d)
They also serve who only stand and wait." (e)

English (Shakespearean) sonnet

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When English sonnets were introduced by Thomas Wyatt in the early 16th century, his sonnets and those of his contemporary the Earl of Surrey were chiefly translations from the Italian of Petrarch and the French of Ronsard and others. While Wyatt introduced the sonnet into English, it was Surrey who gave it a rhyming meter, and a structural division into quatrains of a kind that now characterizes the typical English sonnet. Having previously circulated in manuscripts only, both poets' sonnets were first published in Richard Tottel's Songes and Sonnetts, better known as Tottel's Miscellany (1557).

It was, however, Sir Philip Sidney's sequence Astrophel and Stella (1591) that started the English vogue for sonnet sequences: the next two decades saw sonnet sequences by William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, Michael Drayton, Samuel Daniel, Fulke Greville, William Drummond of Hawthornden, and many others. These sonnets were all essentially inspired by the Petrarchan tradition, and generally treat of the poet's love for some woman; with the exception of Shakespeare's sequence. The form is often named after Shakespeare, not because he was the first to write in this form but because he became its most famous practitioner. The form consists of fourteen lines structured as three quatrains and a couplet. The third quatrain generally introduces an unexpected sharp thematic or imagistic "turn"; the volta. In Shakespeare's sonnets, however, the volta usually comes in the couplet, and usually summarizes the theme of the poem or introduces a fresh new look at the theme. With only a rare exception, the meter is iambic pentameter, although there is some accepted metrical flexibility (*e.g.*, lines ending with an extra-syllable feminine rhyme, or a trochaic foot rather than an iamb, particularly at the beginning of a line). The usual rhyme scheme is end-rhymed *a-b-a-b*, *c-d-c-d*, *e-f-e-f*, *g-g*.

This example, Shakespeare's Sonnet 116, illustrates the form (with some typical variances one may expect when reading an Elizabethan-age sonnet with modern eyes):

Let me not to the marriage of true minds (a)
Admit impediments, love is not love (b)*
Which alters when it alteration finds, (a)
Or bends with the remover to remove. (b)*
O no, it is an ever fixèd mark (c)**
That looks on tempests and is never shaken; (d)***
It is the star to every wand'ring bark, (c)**
Whose worth's unknown although his height be taken. (d)***
Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks (e)
Within his bending sickle's compass come, (f)*
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, (e)
But bears it out even to the edge of doom: (f)*
If this be error and upon me proved, (g)*
I never writ, nor no man ever loved. (g)*

* PRONUNCIATION/RHYME: Note changes in pronunciation since composition.

** PRONUNCIATION/METER: "Fixed" pronounced as two-syllables, "fixed."

*** RHYME/METER: Feminine-rhyme-ending, eleven-syllable alternative.

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Self Assessment

State the following sentences are True or False:

1. Synecdoche is closely related to metonymy.
2. In poetry meter is the basic rhythmic structure of a verse or lines in verse.
3. A rhymed pair of lines of iambic pentameter make a sonnet.
4. Eight feet making up the line was either a dactyl or spondee.
5. An ode is typically a lyrical verse written in praise of.
6. ABBACDECDE is the most common rhyme of english ode.
7. Repetition of similar sounds in two or more words and is most often used in poetry and songs are called rhyme.
8. Milton was the most famous writer of heroic couplets.
9. Pastoral is a mode of literature in which the author employs various techniques.
10. Metonymy and synecdoche may be considered as sub-species of metaphor.

5.7.2 Spenserian Sonnet

A variant on the English form is the Spenserian sonnet, named after Edmund Spenser (*c*.1552–1599) in which the rhyme scheme is, *abab*, *bcbc*, *cdcd*, *ee*. In a Spenserian sonnet there does not appear to be a requirement that the initial octave sets up a problem that the closing sestet "answers", as is the case with a Petrarchan sonnet. Instead, the form is treated as three quatrains connected by the interlocking rhyme scheme and followed by a couplet. The linked rhymes of his quatrains suggest the linked rhymes of such Italian forms as terza rima. This example is taken from Amoretti.

Happy ye leaves! whenas those lily hands
Happy ye leaves! whenas those lily hands, (a)
Which hold my life in their dead doing might, (b)
Shall handle you, and hold in love's soft bands, (a)
Like captives trembling at the victor's sight. (b)
And happy lines on which, with starry light, (b)
Those lamping eyes will deign sometimes to look,(c)
And read the sorrows of my dying sprite, (b)
Written with tears in heart's close bleeding book. (c)
And happy rhymes! bathed in the sacred brook (c)
Of Helicon, whence she derived is, (d)
When ye behold that angel's blessed look, (c)
My soul's long lacked food, my heaven's bliss. (d)
Leaves, lines, and rhymes seek her to please alone, (e)
Whom if ye please, I care for other none. (e)

5.7.3 Modern Sonnet

With the advent of free verse, the sonnet came to be seen as somewhat old-fashioned and fell out of use for a time among some schools of poets. However, a number of modern poets, including Wilfred

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Owen, John Berryman, George Meredith, Edwin Morgan, Robert Frost, Rupert Brooke, George Sterling, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Federico García Lorca, E.E. Cummings, Jorge Luis Borges, Pablo Neruda, Robert Lowell, Joan Brossa, Vikram Seth, Rainer Maria Rilke, Jan Kal, Ernest Hilbert, Kim Addonizio, and Seamus Heaney continued to use the form. Elizabeth Bishop's inverted "Sonnet" was one of her last poems. Ted Berrigan's book, "The Sonnets", is an arresting and curious take on the form. Paul Muldoon often experiments with 14 lines and sonnet rhymes, though without regular sonnet meter. The advent of the New Formalism movement in the United States has also contributed to contemporary interest in the sonnet.

5.8 Summary

- Synecdoche, wherein a specific part of something is used to refer to the whole, is usually understood as a specific kind of metonymy.
- Ode is a type of lyrical verse. A classic ode is structured in three major parts: the strophe, the antistrophe, and the epode.
- Pastoral is a mode of literature in which the author employs various techniques to place the complex life into a simple one.
- Pastoral shepherds and maidens usually have Greek names like Corydon or Philomela, reflecting the origin of the pastoral genre.
- A rhyme is a repetition of similar sounds in two or more words and is most often used in poetry and songs.

5.9 Keywords

Spondee : A foot consisting of two long syllables.

Anapest : A metrical foot consisting of two short or unstressed syllables followed by one long or stressed syllable.

Prosody : The pattern of rhythm and sound used in poetry.

Hymnody : The singer or composition of hymns.

5.10 Review Questions

1. What are synecdoche and example of it?
2. What does the english term pastoral poetry mean?
3. Differentiate between eye rhyme and mind rhyme.
4. What do you mean by the term personification?
5. What is sonnet? Explain spenserian sonnet.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. True
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. False
7. True
8. False
9. True
10. True

Notes

5.11 Further Readings

Books

A Glossary of Literary Terms — M.H.Abrams
Literary Terms: a practical glossary — Brian Moon
A Guide to Literary Terms — Gail Rae
A new handbook of Literary terms — David Mikics

Online links

http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/synecdocheterm.htm
http://www.ajdrake.com/e252_fall_04/materials/guides/poetry_form.htm
http://cla.calpoly.edu/~dschwart/engl339/pastoral.html

Unit 6: Major Literary Terms-V

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about negative capability, hellenism, supernaturalism
- Explain the term renaissance of wonder, fancy and imagination
- Discuss briefly about dramatic monologue.

Introduction

"Literary terms" refers to the words themselves with which we identify and designate literary elements and techniques. They are not found in literature and they are not "used" by authors. Literary terms are just a list of terms used in literature. They could be things like allegory, metaphor or hyperbole. They could also be things used to describe different types of literature like autobiography, etc.

6.1 Negative Capability

Negative capability describes the resistance to a set of institutional arrangements or a system of knowledge about the world and human experience. It explains the capacity of human beings to reject the totalizing constraints of a closed context, and to both experience phenomenon free from any epistemological bounds as well as to assert their own will and individuality upon their activity. The term was first used by the Romantic poet John Keats to critique those who sought to categorize all experience and phenomena and turn them into a theory of knowledge. It has recently been appropriated

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by social theorist Roberto Unger to explain how human beings innovate and resist within confining social contexts.

6.1.1 Keats: The Poet's Turn of Phrase

John Keats used the term negative capability to describe the artist as one who is receptive to the world and its natural phenomena, and to reject those who tried to formulate theories or categorize knowledge. In a letter to his brothers on December 21, 1817 he employed negative capability to criticize Coleridge, who he thought sought knowledge over beauty:

I had not a dispute but a disquisition with Dilke, on various subjects; several things dovetailed in my mind, and at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in literature and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously-I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason-Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge. This pursued through Volumes would perhaps take us no further than this that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.

The origin of the term is unknown, but some scholars have hypothesized that Keats was influenced in his studies of medicine and chemistry, and that it refers to the negative pole of an electric current which is passive and receptive. In the same way that the negative pole receives the current from the positive pole, the poet receives impulses from a world that is full of mystery and doubt, which cannot be explained but which the poet can translate into art.

Although this was the only time that Keats used the term, this view of aesthetics and rejection of a rationalizing tendency has influenced much commentary on Romanticism and the tenets of human experience.

6.2 Renaissance of Wonder

The Renaissance was a cultural movement that spanned roughly the 14th to the 17th century, beginning in Italy in the Late Middle Ages and later spreading to the rest of Europe. The term is also used more loosely to refer to the historical era, but since the changes of the Renaissance were not uniform across Europe, this is a general use of the term. As a cultural movement, it encompassed a flowering of literature, science, art, religion, and politics, and a resurgence of learning based on classical sources, the development of linear perspective in painting, and gradual but widespread educational reform. Traditionally, this intellectual transformation has resulted in the Renaissance being viewed as a bridge between the middle Ages and the Modern era. Although the Renaissance saw revolutions in many intellectual pursuits, as well as social and political upheaval, it is perhaps best known for its artistic developments and the contributions of such polymaths as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, who inspired the term "Renaissance man".

There is a consensus the Renaissance began in Florence, Tuscany in the 14th century. Various theories have been proposed to account for its origins and characteristics, focusing on a variety of factors including the social and civic peculiarities of Florence at the time; its political structure; the patronage of its dominant family, the Medici.

Task Define the term Renaissance.

The Renaissance has a long and complex historiography, and there has been much debate among historians as to the usefulness of Renaissance as a term and as a historical delineation. Some have called into question whether the Renaissance was a cultural "advance" from the middle Ages, instead

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seeing it as a period of pessimism and nostalgia for the classical age, while others have instead focused on the continuity between the two eras. Indeed, some have called for an end to the use of the term, which they see as a product of presentism–the use of history to validate and glorify modern ideals. The word Renaissance has also been used to describe other historical and cultural movements, such as the Carolingian Renaissance and the Renaissance of the 12th century.

The Renaissance was a cultural movement that profoundly affected European intellectual life in the early modern period. Beginning in Italy, and spreading to the rest of Europe by the 16th century, its influence affected literature, philosophy, art, politics, science, religion, and other aspects of intellectual inquiry. Renaissance scholars employed the humanist method in study, and searched for realism and human emotion in art.

In all, the Renaissance could be viewed as an attempt by intellectuals to study and improve the secular and worldly, both through the revival of ideas from antiquity, and through novel approaches to thought. Some scholars, such as Rodney Stark, play down the Renaissance in favor of the earlier innovations of the Italian city states in the High Middle Ages, which married responsive government, Christianity and the birth of capitalism. This analysis argues that, whereas the great European states were absolutist monarchies, and others were under direct Church control, the independent city republics of Italy took over the principles of capitalism invented on monastic estates and set off a vast unprecedented commercial revolution which preceded and financed the Renaissance.

6.3 Hellenism

Hellenism, as a neoclassical movement distinct from other Roman or Greco-Roman forms of neoclassicism emerging after the European Renaissance, is most often associated with Germany and England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In Germany, the preeminent figure in the movement was Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the art historian and aesthetic theoretician who first articulated what would come to be the orthodoxies of the Greek ideal in sculpture (though he only examined Roman copies of Greek statues, and was murdered before setting foot in Greece). For Winckelmann, the essence of Greek art was noble simplicity and sedate grandeur, often encapsulated in sculptures representing moments of intense emotion or tribulation. Other major figures include Hegel, Schlegel, Schelling and Schiller.

In England, the so-called "second generation" Romantic poets, especially John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron are considered exemplars of Hellenism. Drawing from Winckelmann, these poets frequently turned to Greece as a model of ideal beauty, transcendent philosophy, democratic politics, and homosociality or homosexuality. Women poets, such as Mary Robinson, Felicia Hemans, Letitia Elizabeth Landon and Elizabeth Barrett Browning were also deeply involved in retelling the myths of classical Greece.

The Victorian period saw new forms of Hellenism, none more famous than the social theory of Matthew Arnold in his book, Culture and Anarchy. For Arnold, Hellenism was the opposite of Hebraism. The former term stood for "spontaneity," and for "things as they really are; the latter term stood for "strictness of conscience," and for "conduct and obedience." Human history, according to Arnold, oscillated between these two modes. Other major figures include Swinburne, Pater, Wilde, and Symonds.

6.4 Supernaturalism

Supernaturalism is the theological belief that a force or power other than man or nature is ultimate. This supernatural force (God) regulates both man and nature, making both of them subordinate to it.

- God as creator.
- Man is considered to be higher than the rest of nature.

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Supernaturalism is a belief in an otherworldly realm or reality that, in one way or another, is commonly associated with all forms of religion. Evidence of neither the idea of nature nor the experience of a purely natural realm is found among primitive people, who inhabit a wonder world charged with the sacred power (or mana), spirits, and deities. Primitive man associates whatever is experienced as uncanny or powerful with the presence of a sacred or numinous power; yet he constantly lives in a profane realm that is made comprehensible by a paradigmatic, mythical sacred realm.

What is supernaturalism? It is the belief that events and values require supernatural powers or authority for their explanation. Natural explanations may be reliable on an immediate level, but they in turn must eventually require a supernatural cause.

Did u know? According to supernaturalism, a supernatural order is the original and fundamental source of all that exists. It is this supernatural order which defines the limits of what may be known.

The difference between these two positions is one of the fundamental differences between atheists and theists-it is a difference which tends to cause the most disagreement and most friction. Atheists tend to be naturalists - taking the perspective that this natural world is all there is, all there is to know, and does not require anything "supernatural" to explain it. Theists tend to be supernaturalists - assuming that a supernatural realm exists beyond what we see and is necessary in order to explain our universe.

Supernaturalism is the belief that there are beings, forces, and phenomena such as God, angels or miracles which interact with the physical universe in remarkable and unique ways. Supernaturalism is a fundamental premise of theism. Theists by definition hold to a supernaturalistic worldview which stands in contrast to the atheistic premise of naturalism, which denies the existence of any supernatural phenomena.

The word supernatural comes from the Latin word super meaning "above" + nature. It should however, be noted that although some supernatural phenomena may not be perceived by natural or empirical senses, a great many supernatural events have been witnessed in biblical and modern times. Numerous events in Earth's history require a supernaturalistic belief before they can be correctly understood or interpreted.

Self Assessment

State the following sentences are True or False:

1. Negative capability describes the resistance to a set of institutional arrangements.
2. The term negative capability was first used by the Romantic poet John Milton.
3. Renaissance was a neoclassical movement that spanned roughly the 14th to 17th century.
4. The Renaissance has a long and complex historiography.
5. Hellenism is a cultural movement distinct from other Roman.
6. Mary Robinson were deeply involved in retelling the myths of classical Greece.
7. The Supernatural force regulates both man and nature.

6.5 Fancy and Imagination

Imagination, also called the faculty of imagining, is the ability of forming mental images, sensations and concepts, in a moment when they are not perceived through sight, hearing or other senses.

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Imagination is the work of the mind that helps develop. Imagination helps provide meaning to experience and understanding to knowledge; it is a fundamental facility through which people make sense of the world, and it also plays a key role in the learning process. A basic training for imagination is listening to storytelling (narrative), in which the exactness of the chosen words is the fundamental factor to "evoke worlds."

It is accepted as the innate ability and process of inventing partial or complete personal realms within the mind from elements derived from sense perceptions of the shared world. The term is technically used in psychology for the process of reviving in the mind, percepts of objects formerly given in sense perception. Since this use of the term conflicts with that of ordinary language, some psychologists have preferred to describe this process as "imaging" or "imagery" or to speak of it as "reproductive" as opposed to "productive" or "constructive" imagination. Imagined images are seen with the "mind's eye."

Notes Imagination can also be expressed through stories such as fairy tales or fantasies. Most famous inventions or entertainment products were developed from the inspiration of someone's imagination.

"Imagination is an effort of the mind to develop a discourse that had previously been known, a development of a concept of what is already there by the help of our reason, to develop a results of new thinking." The common use of the term is for the process of forming new images in the mind that have not been previously experienced with the help of what is ever been seen, hear, or feel before, or at least only partially or in different combinations. Some typical examples follow:

- Fairy tale
- Fiction

Imagination is an experimental partition of the mind used to develop theories and ideas based on functions. Taking objects from real perceptions, the imagination uses complex IF-functions to develop new or revised ideas. This part of the mind is vital to developing better and easier ways to accomplish old and new tasks. These experimental ideas can be safely conducted inside a virtual world and then, if the idea is probable and the function is true, the idea can be actualized in reality.

Did u know? Imagination is the key to new development of the mind and can be shared with others, progressing collectively.

Regarding the volunteer effort, imagination can be classified as:

- Voluntary (the dream from the sleep, the daydream).
- Involuntary (the reproductive imagination, the creative imagination, the dream of perspective).

6.6 Dramatic Monologue

M. H. Abrams notes the following three features of the dramatic monologue as it applies to poetry:

1. A single person, who is patently not the poet, utters the speech that makes up the whole of the poem, in a specific situation at a critical moment.
2. This person addresses and interacts with one or more other people; but we know of the auditors' presence, and what they say and do, only from clues in the discourse of the single speaker.

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3. The main principle controlling the poet's choice and formulation of what the lyric speaker says is to reveal to the reader, in a way that enhances its interest, the speaker's temperament and character.

Definitions of the dramatic monologue, a form invented and practiced principally by Robert Browning, Alfred Tennyson, Dante Rossetti, and other Victorians, have been much debated in the last several decades. Everyone agrees that to be a dramatic monologue a poem must have a speaker and an implied auditor and that the reader often perceives a gap between what that speaker says and what he or she actually reveals. In one of the most influential, though hotly contested definitions, Robert Langbaum saw the form as a continuation of an essentially Romantic "poetry of experience" in which the reader experiences a tension between sympathy and judgment. One problem with this approach, as Glenn Everett has argued, lies in the fact that contemporary readers of Browning's poems found them vastly different from Langbaum's Wordsworthian model.

Many writers on the subject have disagreed, pointing out that readers do not seem ever to sympathize with the speakers in some of Browning's major poems, such as "Porphria's Lover" or "My Last Duchess." Glenn Everett proposes that Browninesque dramatic monologue has three requirements:

1. The reader takes the part of the silent listener.
2. The speaker uses a case-making, argumentative tone.
3. We complete the dramatic scene from within, by means of inference and imagination.

6.7 Summary

- Negative capability describes the resistance to a set of institutional arrangements or a system of knowledge about the world and human experience.
- The Renaissance was a cultural movement that profoundly affected European intellectual life in the early modern period.
- Supernaturalism is the theological belief that a force or power other than man or nature is ultimate.
- Imagination, also called the faculty of imagining, is the ability of forming mental images, sensations and concepts.

5.8 Keywords

Consensus **:** General agreement.

Upheaval **:** Violent or sudden change or an upward displacement of part of the earth's crust.

Spanned **:** The full extent of something from end to end.

Monologue **:** A long speech by one actor in a play.

6.9 Review Questions

1. Write a short note on negative capability.
2. Explain the term Renaissance of wonder.
3. What is supernaturalism?
4. Define the term Dramatic monologue and write the features of dramatic monologue which applies in poetry, according to M.H. Abrams.

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Answers: Self Assessment

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. False
6. True
7. True

6.10 Further Readings

Books

A Glossary of Literary Terms — M.H.Abrams
Literary Terms: a practical glossary — Brian Moon
A Guide to Literary Terms — Gail Rae
A new handbook of Literary terms — David Mikics

Online links

http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/rb/dm1.html
http://www.keatsian.co.uk/negative-capability.htm

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Unit 7: Major Literary Terms-VI

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about the victorian compromise and victorian period—early and late
- Explain the term pre-raphaelite poetry and art for art's sake
- Describe the term aestheticism.

Introduction

Exploring the patterns created by the formal elements of literature—alliteration, image, tone, and metaphor, for example—helps us to understand more deeply a text's meaning and the nuances that enrich that meaning. This kind of formal close reading of the text is fundamental to any analysis of literature. A literary theme is often not apparent early in every story. The theme is not the same as the storyline or the subject. The theme is the meaning on a deeper, more abstract level.

7.1 Victorian Compromise

The particular situation, which saw prosperity and progress on the one hand, and poverty, ugliness and injustice on the other, which opposed ethical conformism to corruption, moralism and philanthropy to money and capitalistic greediness, and which separated private life from public

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behaviour, is usually referred to as the "Victorian Compromise". However, it also aroused the concern of more and more theorists and reformers who tried to improve living conditions at all levels, including hospitals, schools and prisons.

The word Victorian has come to be used to describe a set of moral and sexual values. The Victorians were great moraliser, probably because they faced numerous problems on such a scale that they felt obliged to advocate certain values which offered solution or escape. As a rule the values they promoted reflected not the world as they saw it the harsh social reality around them, but the world as they would have like it to be.

The Victorian Compromise was a complex and contradictory era. It was the age of progress, stability, great social reforms but it was also charactersised by poverta, injustice and social unrest. The Victorians promoted a code of values that reflect the world as they wantede it to be, not as it really was, based on personal duty, hard work, respectability and charity. In thi periods was very important to work hard for improve the society. The idea of respectability distinguished the middle from lower class. Respectability was a mixture of both morality and hipocrisy, severety and conformity to social standards. It implied the possesion of good manners, the ownership of confortable house with servants and a carriage, regualr attendance at church, and charity activity. Philanthropy was a wide phenomenon: the rich middle class expolited the poor ruthlesssly and at the same time managed to help "stay children, fallen woman and drunk men". The husband represented the autority and the key role of woman regarded the education of children and the hosework. Sexuality was generally repressed in its public and private forms, and prudery in its most extreme manifestations led to denunciation of nudity in art, and the rejection of words with sexual connotation from everyday vocabulary.

7.1.1 Faith and Progress

This is the period of novel because they represents the complexity of the period and the profound changes that characterised it. For the first time there was a communion of interests and opinions between writers and their readers. Same code of values: optimism, conformism and philanthropy. The writers depictecd society as they saw it; they were aware of evils of their society and denunced them, however they did not criticise the world they lived in, they just aimed at making readers realise social injustice and voiced their fears and doubts. The setting was the city because it was the main symbol of the industrial civilisation, the expression of anonymous lives and lost identities. Dandy is a bourgeois artist who in spite of his uneasiness, remains a mamber of his class.

Art For Art's Sake: the function of art is that give eternal beauty; only art and beauty can save from evil and distruction. Whitman was born in New York into a working-class family. He had little formal education and he started to worked as an officice boy and then he became a journalist. When he was thirty yars old he travelled in New York, nwe Orleans and Chicago and he descovered the vastness of his country and the variety of its inhabitants. During the civil war he devoted him self to visiting wounded soldiers in the army hospital, he continued to belive in the value of democracy and technological progress. The withman poetry was incorporated in the nine edition of leavs of grass.

Notes "All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their own peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their own peril."—by Oscar Wilde, Preface, "The Picture of Dorian Gray"

The Victorian Period revolves around the political career of Queen Victoria. She was crowned in 1837 and died in 1901 (which put a definite end to her political career). A great deal of change took

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place during this period—brought about because of the Industrial Revolution; so it's not surprising that the literature of the period is often concerned with social reform. As Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) wrote, "The time for levity, insincerity, and idle babble and play-acting, in all kinds, is gone by; it is a serious, grave time."

Of course, in the literature from this period, we see a duality, or double standard, between the concerns for the individual (the exploitation and corruption both at home and abroad) and national success—in what is often referred to as the Victorian Compromise. In reference to Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, E. D. H. Johnson argues: "Their writings... locate the centers of authority not in the existing social order but within the resources of individual being."

Against the backdrop of technological, political, and socioeconomic change, the Victorian Period was bound to be a volatile time, even without the added complications of the religious and institutional challenges brought by Charles Darwin and other thinkers, writers, and doers.

7.1.2 Victorian Period—Early and Late

The Period is often divided into two parts: the early Victorian Period (ending around 1870) and the late Victorian Period. Writers associated with the early period are: Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892), Robert Browning (1812-1889), Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861), Emily Bronte (1818-1848), Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), George Eliot (1819-1880), Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) and Charles Dickens (1812-1870).

Writers associated with the late Victorian Period include: George Meredith (1828-1909), Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889), Oscar Wilde (1856-1900), Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), A.E. Housman (1859-1936), and Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894).

While Tennyson and Browning represented pillars in Victorian poetry, Dickens and Eliot contributed to the development of the English novel. Perhaps the most quintessentially Victorian poetic works of the period is: Tennyson's "In Memorium" (1850), which mourns the loss of his friend. Henry James describes Eliot's "Middlemarch" (1872) as "organized, moulded, balanced composition, gratifying the reader with the sense of design and construction."

7.2 Pre-Raphaelite Poetry

The term *Pre-Raphaelite*, which refers to both art and literature, is confusing because there were essentially two different and almost opposed movements, the second of which grew out of the first. The term itself originated in relation to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, an influential group of mid-nineteenth-century avante garde painters associated with Ruskin who had great effect upon British, American, and European art. Those poets who had some connection with these artists and whose work presumably shares the characteristics of their art include Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, George Meredith, William Morris, and Algernon Charles Swinburne.

The second form of Pre-Raphaelitism, which grows out of the first under the direction of D.G. Rossetti, is Aesthetic Pre-Raphaelitism, and it in turn produced the Arts and Crafts Movement, modern functional design, and the Aesthetes and Decadents. Rossetti and his follower Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) emphasized themes of eroticized medievalism and pictorial techniques that produced moody atmosphere. This form of Pre-Raphaelitism has most relevance to poetry; for although the earlier combination of a realistic style with elaborate symbolism appears in a few poems, particularly those of the Rossettis, this second stage finally had the most influence upon literature. All the poets associated with Pre-Raphaelitism draw upon the poetic continuum that descends from Spenser through Keats and Tennyson—one that emphasizes lush vowel sounds, sensuous description, and subjective psychological states.

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Did u know? Pre-Raphaelitism in poetry had major influence upon the writers of the Decadence as well as upon Gerard Manley Hopkins and W.B. Yeats, both of whom were also influenced by Ruskin and visual Pre-Raphaelitism.

In the mid-19th century, a group of young British artists caused shock and scandal when they revealed the existence of their 'secret Brotherhood' dedicated to overthrowing the artistic conventions of the day.

Steeped in symbolism, boasting an almost unnatural eye for realism, and richly coloured, the works of the Pre-Raphaelites consciously tried to turn back the clock to the days of the early Renaissance, while simultaneously insisting on painting and drawing their subjects from direct observation.

Their impact was significant, and would go on to influence numerous additional writers and designers beyond their initial small circle in the years after their first successes. Today they are widely seen as one of the first avant-garde art movements in history, and the instigators of numerous later artistic and social movements.

The poetry of drawing: Pre-Raphaelite designs, studies and watercolours are the most comprehensive survey of Pre-Raphaelite works on paper to date, and is presented with the assistance of the Birmingham Museum. All of the leading figures of the period are represented, including the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (Millais, Holman Hunt, Rossetti), the artist and social critic John Ruskin, and the second-wave of Pre-Raphaelites (including Burne-Jones, Sandys and Solomon).

Those poets who had some connection with the Pre-Raphaelite circle include Christina Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, George Meredith, William Morris, and Algernon Charles Swinburne. Pre-Raphaelitism in poetry had major influence upon the writers of the Decadence of the 1890s, such as Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, Michael Field, and Oscar Wilde, as well as upon Gerard Manley Hopkins and William Butler Yeats, both of whom were influenced by John Ruskin and visual Pre-Raphaelitism.

Pre-Raphaelitism in painting had two forms or stages, first, the hard-edge symbolic naturalism of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood that began in 1849 and, second, the moody, erotic medievalism that took form in the later 1850s. Many critics imply that only this second, or Aesthetic, Pre-Raphaelitism has relevance to poetry. In fact, although the combination of realistic style with elaborate symbolism that distinguishes the early movement appears in a few poems, particularly in those by James Collinson and the Rossettis, this second stage finally had the largest—at least the most easily noticeable—influence on literature.

Nonetheless, if one looks for a poet whose work parallels the artistic project of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, one immediately notices Robert Browning , whose work was enormously popular with them all and a particular influence on Rossetti, who wrote out Pauline (1833) from the British Museum copy. Like the paintings of the Brotherhood, Browning's poems simultaneously extend the boundaries of subject and create a kind of abrasive realism, and like the work of the young painters, his also employ elaborate symbolism drawn from biblical types to carry the audience beyond the aesthetic surface, to which he, like the painters, aggressively draws attention. One must mention the Browninesque element in Pre-Raphaelite poetry because it appears intermittently all the way up to Hopkins in self-consciously difficult language, the dramatic monologue, and elaborate applications of biblical typology.

Aesthetic Pre-Raphaelitism, nonetheless, has most in common with the poets of this group, all of whom draw upon the poetic continuum that descends from Spenser through Keats and Tennyson—upon the poetic line, in other words, that emphasizes lush vowel sounds, sensuous description, subjective psychological states, elaborate personification, and complex poetic forms, such as the sestina, borrowed from Italian and Provençal love poetry.

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7.3 Art for Art's Sake

"Art for art's sake" is the usual English rendering of a French slogan, from the early 19th century, ''l'art pour l'art'', and expresses a philosophy that the intrinsic value of art, and the only "true" art, is divorced from any didactic, moral or utilitarian function. Such works are sometimes described as "autotelic", from the Greek autoteles, "complete in itself", a concept that has been expanded to embrace "inner-directed" or "self-motivated" human beings.

A Latin version of this phrase, "Ars gratia artis", is used as a slogan by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and appears in the circle around the roaring head of Leo the Lion in their motion picture logo.

"L'art pour l'art" (translated as "art for art's sake") is credited to Theophile Gautier (1811–1872), who was the first to adopt the phrase as a slogan. Gautier was not, however, the first to write those words: they appear in the works of Victor Cousin, Benjamin Constant, and Edgar Allan Poe. For example, Poe argues in his essay "The Poetic Principle" (1850), that

We have taken it into our heads that to write a poem simply for the poem's sake and to acknowledge such to have been our design, would be to confess ourselves radically wanting in the true poetic dignity and force:—but the simple fact is that would we but permit ourselves to look into our own souls we should immediately there discover that under the sun there neither exists nor can exist any work more thoroughly dignified, more supremely noble, than this very poem, this poem per se, this poem which is a poem and nothing more, this poem written solely for the poem's sake.

Task Consider the term Art for Art's Sake in detail.

"Art for art's sake" was a bohemian creed in the nineteenth century, a slogan raised in defiance of those who, from John Ruskin to the much later Communist advocates of socialist realism, thought that the value of art was to serve some moral or didactic purpose. "Art for art's sake" affirmed that art was valuable as art that artistic pursuits were their own justification and that art did not need moral justification, and indeed, was allowed to be morally subversive.

In fact, James McNeill Whistler wrote the following in which he discarded the accustomed role of art in the service of the state or official religion, which had adhered to its practice since the Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth century:

Art should be independent of all claptrap —should stand alone and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism and the like.

Such a brusque dismissal also expressed the artist's distancing himself from sentimentalism. All that remains of Romanticism in this statement is the reliance on the artist's own eye and sensibility as the arbiter.

The explicit slogan is associated in the history of English art and letters with Walter Pater and his followers in the Aesthetic Movement, which was self-consciously in rebellion against Victorian moralism. It first appeared in English in two works published simultaneously in 1868: Pater's review of William Morris's poetry in the Westminster Review and in William Blake by Algernon Charles Swinburne. A modified form of Pater's review appeared in his Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873), one of the most influential texts of the Aesthetic Movement.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The Victorian period revolves around the political career of ..... .
2. The Victorian period was bound to be a ..... time.

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3. The word Victorian has come to be used to describe a set of ..... and ..... values.
4. The British decadent writers were much influenced by the ..... professor Walter Pater.
5. ..... was a movement in early 20th century Anglo-American poetry.

7.4 Aestheticism

Aestheticism or the Aesthetic Movement was a 19th century European art movement that emphasized aesthetic values more than socio-political themes for literature, fine art, the decorative arts, and interior design. Generally, it represents the same tendencies that symbolism or decadence represented in France, or decadentismo represented in Italy, and may be considered the British version of the same style. It was part of the anti-19th century reaction and had post-Romantic origins, and as such anticipates modernism. It was a feature of the late 19th century from about 1868 to about 1900.

7.4.1 Aesthetic Literature

The British decadent writers were much influenced by the Oxford professor Walter Pater and his essays published during 1867–68, in which he stated that life had to be lived intensely, with an ideal of beauty. His text Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873) was very well regarded by art-oriented young men of the late 19th century. Writers of the Decadent movement writers used the slogan "Art for Art's Sake" (L'art pour l'art), the origin of which is debated. Some claim that it was invented by the philosopher Victor Cousin, although Angela Leighton in the publication On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism and the Legacy of a Word (2007) notes that the phrase was used by Benjamin Constant as early as 1804. It is generally accepted to have been promoted by Theophile Gautier in France, who interpreted the phrase to suggest that there was not any real association between art and morality.

The artists and writers of Aesthetic style tended to profess that the Arts should provide refined sensuous pleasure, rather than convey moral or sentimental messages. As a consequence, they did not accept John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold's utilitarian conception of art as something moral or useful. Instead, they believed that Art did not have any didactic purpose; it need only be beautiful. The Aesthetes developed a cult of beauty, which they considered the basic factor of art. Life should copy Art, they asserted. They considered nature as crude and lacking in design when compared to art. The main characteristics of the style were: suggestion rather than statement, sensuality, great use of symbols, and synaesthetic effects—that is, correspondence between words, colours and music. Music was used to establish mood.

7.5 Imagist

Imagism was a movement in early 20th-century Anglo-American poetry that favored precision of imagery and clear, sharp language. The Imagists rejected the sentiment and discursiveness typical of much Romantic and Victorian poetry. This was in contrast to their contemporaries, the Georgian poets, who were by and large content to work within that tradition. Group publication of work under the Imagist name appearing between 1914 and 1917 featured writing by many of the most significant figures in Modernist poetry in English, as well as a number of other Modernist figures prominent in fields other than poetry.

Based in London, the Imagists were drawn from Great Britain, Ireland and the United States. Somewhat unusually for the time, the Imagists featured a number of women writers among their major figures. Imagism is also significant historically as the first organised Modernist English language literary movement or group.

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Notes In the words of T. S. Eliot: "The point de repere usually and conveniently taken as the starting-point of modern poetry is the group denominated 'imagists' in London about 1910."

At the time Imagism emerged, Longfellow and Tennyson were considered the paragons of poetry, and the public valued the sometimes moralising tone of their writings. In contrast, Imagism called for a return to what were seen as more Classical values, such as directness of presentation and economy of language, as well as a willingness to experiment with non-traditional verse forms. The focus on the "thing" as "thing" (an attempt at isolating a single image to reveal its essence) also mirrors contemporary developments in avant-garde art, especially Cubism. Although Imagism isolates objects through the use of what Ezra Pound called "luminous details", Pound's Ideogrammic Method of juxtaposing concrete instances to express an abstraction is similar to Cubism's manner of synthesizing multiple perspectives into a single image.

7.6 Summary

- The word Victorian has come to be used to describe a set of moral and sexual values.
- The Victorian Compromise was a complex and contradictory era. It was the age of progress, stability, great social reforms but it was also charactersised by poverta, injustice and social unrest.
- "Art for art's sake" is the usual English rendering of a French slogan, from the early 19th century.
- The British decadent writers were much influenced by the Oxford professor Walter Pater and his essays published during 1867–68.
- Imagism was a movement in early 20th-century Anglo-American poetry that favored precision of imagery and clear, sharp language.

7.7 Keywords

Volatile : Ciable to change rapidly and unpredictably.

Philanthropy : The desire to promote the welfare of others.

Instigator : Bring about.

Topology : The way in which constituent parts are arranged.

Aesthetic : Concerned with beauty.

7.8 Review Questions

1. Examine the concepts of the victorian compromise.
2. Explain the term pre-raphaelite poetry.
3. Define aestheticism. Explain the term aesthetic literature.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. Queen Victoria
2. Volatile
3. Moral and Sexual
4. Oxford
5. Imagism

7.9 Further Readings

Notes

Books

A Glossary of Literary Terms — M.H.Abrams

Literary Terms: a practical glossary — Brian Moon

A Guide to Literary Terms — Gail Rae

A new handbook of Literary terms — David Mikics

Online links

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7474/Aestheticism

http://doc.studenti.it/riassunto/inglese/victorian-compromise.html

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Unit 8: Major Literary Terms-VII

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss briefly about the poems, war poets and movement poets
- Explain the term modernist poetry.

Introduction

The main idea or underlying meaning of a literary work. A theme may be stated or implied. Theme differs from the subject or topic of a literary work in that it involves a statement or opinion about the topic. Not every literary work has a theme. Themes may be major or minor. A major theme is an idea the author returns to time and again. It becomes one of the most important ideas in the story. Minor themes are ideas that may appear from time to time. It is importnat to recognize the difference between the theme of a literary work and the subject of a literary work. The subject is the topic on which an author has chosen to write. The theme, however, makes some statement about or expresses some opinion on that topic. For example, the subject of a story might be war while the theme might be the idea that war is useless.

8.1 War Poets

A War poet is a poet writing in time of and on the subject of war. The term, which is applied especially to those in military service during World War I, was documented as early as 1848 in reference to German revolutionary poet, George Herwegh.

It was in English poetry, such as that of Wilfred Owen, that the war poem became an established genre marker and attracted growing popular interest. At the time the term soldier poet was used, but then dropped out of favour. The evolution of the concept was linked to a distinction drawn between poets who were anti-war in attitude and those who wrote more traditional war poetry. What makes a war poet is not well-defined. The public may have seen war poems as reportage creating direct emotional links to the soldier.

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Several poets writing in English were soldiers, and wrote about their experiences of war. Number of them died on active service, most famously Rupert Brooke, Edward Thomas, Isaac Rosenberg, Wilfred Owen, and Charles Sorley. Others including Ivor Gurney and Siegfried Sassoon survived, but many were scarred by their experiences, reflected in their poetry.

Many poems by British war poets were published in newspapers and then collected into anthologies. Several of these early anthologies were published during the war and were very popular, though the tone of the poetry changed as the war progressed. One of the wartime anthologies was The Muse in Arms, published in 1917. Several anthologies were also published in the years after the war had ended.

In France the popular poet and song-writer Theodore Botrel was appointed as official "Bard of the armies" in 1915. According to the New York Times he was authorised by the Minister of War "to enter all military depots, camps and hospitals for the purpose of reciting and singing his patriotic poems."

Did u know? Calligrammes, subtitled Poems of war and peace 1913-1916, is a collection of poems by Guillaume Apollinaire published in 1918.

The Italians had their own war poetry, most notably that of Giuseppe Ungaretti. According to Patrick Bridgwater in The German Poets of the First World War, the closest comparison to Owen would be Anton Schnack, and Schnack's only peer would be August Stramm.

Task Write a short note on war poets.

In Russian literature, Nikolay Gumilyov's war poems were assembled in the collection The Quiver (1916). Alexander Blok's The Twelve is a culmination of apocalyptic broodings during the war years. During the First World War, Ilya Ehrenburg became a war correspondent for a St. Petersburg newspaper. He wrote a series of articles about the mechanized war that later on were also published as a book, "The Face of War". His poetry now also concentrated on subjects of war and destruction, as in "On the Eve", his third lyrical book. Nikolay Semenovich Tikhonov volunteered for the army at the outbreak of World War I and served in a hussar regiment; he entered the Red Army in 1918 and was demobilized in 1922. He began writing poetry early; his first collection, Orda (The horde, 1922), "shows startling maturity" and "contains most of the few short poems which have made him famous."

Robert H. Ross characterises 'war poets' as a subgroup of the Georgian Poetry writers: those who were in uniform including therefore Robert Graves, Isaac Rosenberg, Robert Nichols, Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon.

Robert Graves and David Jones both served in the trenches and survived. Graves did not use his war experience as poetic material, instead recounting it as autobiography in Goodbye to All that, whereas Jones postponed its use, incorporating it into modernist forms.

In November 1985, a slate memorial was unveiled in Poet's Corner commemorating 16 poets of the Great War: Richard Aldington, Laurence Binyon, Edmund Blunden, Rupert Brooke, Wilfrid Gibson, Robert Graves, Julian Grenfell, Ivor Gurney, David Jones, Robert Nichols, Wilfred Owen, Herbert Read, Isaac Rosenberg, Siegfried Sassoon, Charles Sorley and Edward Thomas.

Notes

Notes The entire genre of British war poetry is ably discussed in Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* and in Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*.

8.2 The Poems

Siegfried Sassoon, How to Die; Wilfred Owen, Anthem for a Doomed Youth; Wilfred Owen, Dulce et Decorum Est; Herbert Read, The Happy Warrior; W. N. Hodgson, Before Action; Wilfred Gibson, Back; Philip Larkin, *MCMXIV*.

8.2.1 Movement Poets

The Movement was a term coined by J. D. Scott, literary editor of The Spectator, in 1954 to describe a group of writers including Kingsley Amis, Philip Larkin, Donald Davie, D.J. Enright, John Wain, Elizabeth Jennings, Thom Gunn, and Robert Conquest. The Movement was essentially English in character; poets in Scotland and Wales were not generally included.

Thomas Blackburn, Edwin Brock, Hilary Corke, John Fuller, Francis Hope, Ted Hughes, Richard Kell, Thomas Kinsella, Laurence Lerner, Edward Lucie-Smith, George MacBeth, James Michie, Jonathan Price, Vernon Scannell, Anthony Thwaite, Hugo Williams.

The term Movement was coined by J. D. Scott in 1954 to refer to a group of poets including Kingsley Amis, Donald Davie, D. J. Enright, John Wain, Elizabeth Jennings, Thom Gunn, Robert Conquest and of course, Philip Larkin. Together they marked the emergence of the petit-bourgeois provincial intelligentsia, impatient of the Establishment but ultimately committed to neutrality. Indeed, there was never an organised school of poets armed with manifestos and some of the lead figures even denied a conscious involvement, though they appeared together in a number of anthologies and radio programmes. Later, the term came to theorise a distinctive poetic sensibility. Essentially the Movement was a reaction against the extreme romanticism and surrealist detachment of the New Apocalyptics like Dylan Thomas. On the other hand, the Movement poets reconstructed neoclassicism. According to John Press, it was "a general retreat from direct comment or involvement in any political or social doctrine." One way of accounting for the emergence of the Movement is to see it as a part of the general post-war period of reconstruction. The thematic shift and the return to traditional forms and rhythms therefore seem to be natural responses to a national mood of rebuilding. One of the Movement poets, John Wain, once commented: "At such a time, when exhaustion and boredom in the foreground are balanced by guilt and fear in the background, it is natural that a poet should feel the impulse to build." Another of them, Donald Davie, also echoed the same thought: "We had to go back to basics." The Movement poets sought to create an ordinary brand of poetry. They preferred everyday pictures to sensational imagery, and prioritised a friendly, colloquial tone over rhetorical complications. A lead figure of this group, Kingsley Amis, found that they have placed poetry in between "the gardening and the cookery" instead of libraries and seminar hall. Actually, Larkin was little annoyed by the academic sterility of much of Movement poetry, and never actively promoted himself as one of the group. After reading Conquest's draft introduction to New Lines, Larkin privately reveals to him what should be his aesthetic theory: "I feel we have got the method right – plain language, absence of posturings, sense of proportion, humour, abandonment of the dithyrambic ideal–and are waiting for the matter: a fuller and more sensitive response to life as it appears from day to day."

Antithetical to Romanticism, Larkin rejects the famous dichotomy of Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn.' "I have always believed," he writes, "that beauty is beauty, truth, that is not all ye know on

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earth nor all ye need to know." He thus briskly separates the realms that Keats held in ambiguous balance. Larkin often discouraged all sorts of comparative readings, yet 'The Whitsun Weddings' may be viewed as a searching revaluation of the Keatsian odes. Keats's stanzas are autonomous and focus on different aspects of the urn sequentially, while their invocatory openings except the second stanza convey a sense of starting afresh every time. The Keatsian stanzas in 'The Whitsun Weddings' differ from those in Ode on a Grecian Urn both rhythmically and thematically. Instead of varied sestets, Larkin's evenly rhymed stanzas with the a b a b c d e c d e pattern as well as the enjambement take on the reader unstopping like the narrator's journey by the train. Keats held beauty as timeless. Larkin's poem is rooted in a specific time and is also aware of its flow: "That Whitsun, I was late getting away." Paradoxical to the Romantic sensuousness, our organs are here smothered by hot cushions, blinding windscreens and stinking fish-docks. Later the noise of "whoops and skirls" irritates our auditory perception, strikingly in contrast to the "unheard melodies" of Romantic literature. And above all, Larkin's view of marriage as a "happy funeral" and a "religious wounding" strongly destabilises the Romantic creed of "More happy love! More happy, happy love!"

In 'High Windows', too, Larkin is not romanticising the amorous attitude of young people like Keats. He prefers to simply narrate it, as if it is nothing ceremonial, and uses colloquial words from day to day sex life:

"When I see a couple of kids

And guess he is fucking her and she's

Taking pills or wearing a diaphragm".

In fact, it is difficult to find a complex syntax or an unusual word in Larkin's poetry. His pen-picture of English suburbs with "industrial froth" and "acres of dismantled cars", and the occasional portraits of the verdurous countryside in 'The Whitsun Weddings' are quite familiar to the common English reader. 'The Explosion' is also very colloquial and picturesque in its depiction of humdrum mortals like the miners. The outward structure of 'Water' and 'Days' are almost like nursery rhymes, however subtle philosophy they may convey inwardly. Larkin thus breaks the barrier between the poet and the general reader, as Amis observes in 'A Bookshop Idyll.' "Life as it appears from day to day" thus comes again and again in Larkin's poetry. He is neither existentialist nor romantic; from a neutral point he writes what he says in a plain language for the non-specialist recipient, which is the ultimate credo of the Movement poetry.

Self Assessment

State the following sentences are True or False:

1. A war poet is a poet writing in the time of and on the subject of war.
2. Many poems by British war poets were published in magazine.
3. Nikolay Semenovich Tikhonov volunteered for the military at the out break of world war I.
4. The term movement was coined by J.D. Scott in 1954.
5. Modernist poetry refers to poetry written between 1950 and 1990.

8.3 Modernist Poetry

Modernist poetry refers to poetry written between 1890 and 1950 in the tradition of modernist literature in the English language, but the dates of the term depend upon a number of factors, including the nation of origin, the particular school in question, and the biases of the critic setting the dates. It is usually said to have begun with the French Symbolist movement and it artificially

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ends with the Second World War. The beginning and ending of the modernist period are of course arbitrary: poets like Yeats and Rilke started in a post-Romantic, Symbolist vein and modernised their poetic idiom under the impact of political and literary developments; other poets, like T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, or E.E. Cummings went on to produce significant work after World War II. The questions of impersonality and objectivity seem to be crucial to Modernist poetry. Modernism developed out of a tradition of lyrical expression, emphasising the personal imagination, culture, emotions and memories of the poet. For the modernists, it was essential to move away from the merely personal towards an intellectual statement that poetry could make about the world. Even when they reverted to the personal, like Eliot in the Four Quartets or Pound in "The Cantos", they distilled the personal into a poetic texture that claimed universal human significance. After World War II, a new generation of poets sought to revoke the effort of their predecessors towards impersonality and objectivity. Modernism ends with the turn towards confessional poetry in the work of Robert Lowell and Sylvia Plath, among others.

Modernist poetry in English is generally considered to have emerged in the early years of the 20th century with the appearance of the Imagists. In common with many other modernists, these poets wrote in reaction to the perceived excesses of Victorian poetry, with its emphasis on traditional formalism and ornate diction. In many respects, their criticism echoes what William Wordsworth wrote in Preface to Lyrical Ballads to instigate the Romantic movement in British poetry over a century earlier, criticising the gauche and pompous school which then pervaded, and seeking to bring poetry to the layman.

In general, modernists saw themselves as looking back to the best practices of poets in earlier periods and other cultures. Their models included ancient Greek literature, Chinese and Japanese poetry, the troubadours, Dante and the medieval Italian philosophical poets, and the English Metaphysical poets.

Much of early modernist poetry took the form of short, compact lyrics. As it developed, however, longer poems came to the fore. These represent the main contribution of the modernist movement to the 20th-century English poetic canon.

8.4 Summary

- A War poet is a poet writing in time of and on the subject of war.
- Many poems by British war poets were published in newspapers and then collected into anthologies.
- In Russian literature, Nikolay Gumilyov's war poems were assembled in the collection The Quiver (1916).
- Modernist poetry refers to poetry written between 1890 and 1950 in the tradition of modernist literature in the English language.
- After World War II, a new generation of poets sought to revoke the effort of their predecessors towards impersonality and objectivity.

8.5 Keywords

Diaphragm : A dome-shaped muscular partition separating the thorax from the abdomen in mammals.

Dichotomy : A division or contrast between two things that are opposed.

Amorous : Feeling sexual desire.

Enjambement : The continuation of a sentence without a pause beyond the end of a line.

Volunteer : A person who freely offers to do something.

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8.6 Review Questions

1. What is war poet? Explain.
2. Examine the concepts of movement poet.
3. Discuss the term modernist poetry.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. False

8.7 Further Readings

Books

A Glossary of Literary Terms — M.H.Abrams
Literary Terms: a practical glossary — Brian Moon
A Guide to Literary Terms — Gail Rae
A new handbook of Literary terms — David Mikics

Online links

http://www.megaessays.com/viewpaper/39900.html
http://edsitement.neh.gov/curriculum-unit/introduction-modernist-poetry

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Unit 9: Geoffrey Chaucer

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know the introduction to the text, the Canterbury Tales
- Know about the author, Geoffrey Chaucer.

Introduction

The Canterbury Tales is a collection of stories written in Middle English by Geoffrey Chaucer at the end of the 14th century. The tales are told as part of a story-telling contest by a group of pilgrims as they travel together on a journey from Southwark to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. The prize for this contest is a free meal at the Tabard Inn at Southwark on their return.

Following a long list of works written earlier in his career, including Troilus and Criseyde, House of Fame, and Parliament of Fowls, the Canterbury Tales was Chaucer's magnum opus. He uses the tales and the descriptions of the characters to paint an ironic and critical portrait of English society at the time, and particularly of the Church. Structurally, the collection bears the influence of The Decameron, which Chaucer is said to have come across during his first diplomatic mission to Italy in 1372. However, Chaucer peoples his tales with 'sondry folk' rather than Boccaccio's fleeing nobles.

9.1 The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (Non-detailed Study): Introduction to the Text

The Canterbury Tales is at once one of the most famous and most frustrating works of literature ever written. Since its composition in late 1300s, critics have continued to mine new riches from its complex ground, and started new arguments about the text and its interpretation. Chaucer's richly detailed text, so Dryden said, was "God's plenty", and the rich variety of the Tales is partly perhaps the reason for its success. It is both one long narrative and an encyclopedia of shorter narratives; it is both one large drama, and a compilation of most literary forms known to medieval literature: romance, fabliau, Breton lay, moral fable, verse romance, beast fable, prayer to the Virgin and so the list goes on. No

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single literary genre dominates the Tales. The tales include romantic adventures, fabliaux, saint's biographies, animal fables, religious allegories and even a sermon, and range in tone from pious, moralistic tales to lewd and vulgar sexual farces. More often than not, moreover, the specific tone of the tale is extremely difficult to firmly pin down.

This, indeed, is down to one of the key problems of interpreting the Tales themselves-voice: how do we ever know who is speaking? Because Chaucer, early in the Tales, promises to repeat the exact words and style of each speaker as best he can remember it, there is always a tension between Chaucer and the pilgrim's voice he ventriloquises as he re-tells his tale: even the "Chaucer" who is a character on the pilgrim has a distinct and deliberately unChaucerian voice. Is it the Merchant's voice-and the Merchant's opinion-or Chaucer's? Is it Chaucer the character or Chaucer the writer? If it is Chaucer's, are we supposed to take it at face value, or view it ironically? It is for this reason that, throughout this ClassicNote, a conscious effort has been made to refer to the speaker of each tale (the Merchant, in the Merchant's Tale, for example) as the "narrator", a catch-all term which represents both of, or either one of, Chaucer and the speaker in question.

No one knows for certain when Chaucer began to write the Tales-the pilgrimage is usually dated 1387, but that date is subject to much scholarly argument-but it is certain that Chaucer wrote some parts of the Tales at different times, and went back and added Tales to the melting pot. The Knight's Tale, for example, was almost certainly written earlier than the Canterbury project as a separate work, and then adapted into the voice of the Knight; and the Second Nun's Tale, as well as probably the Monk's, probably have a similar compositional history.

Chaucer drew from a rich variety of literary sources to create the Tales, though his principal debt is likely to Boccaccio's Decameron, in which ten nobles from Florence, to escape the plague, stay in a country villa and amuse each other by each telling tales. Boccaccio likely had a significant influence on Chaucer. The Knight's Tale was an English version of a tale by Boccaccio, while six of Chaucer's tales have possible sources in the Decameron: the Miller's Tale, the Reeve's, the Clerk's, the Merchant's, the Franklin's, and the Shipman's.

Notes Chaucer's pilgrims to Canterbury form a wider range of society compared to Boccaccio's elite storytellers, allowing for greater differences in tone and substance.

The text of the Tales itself does not survive complete, but in ten fragments. Due to the fact that there are no links made between these ten fragments in most cases, it is extremely difficult to ascertain precisely in which order Chaucer wanted the tales to be read. This Classic Note corresponds to the order followed in Larry D. Benson's "Riverside Chaucer", which is undoubtedly the best edition of Chaucer currently available.

9.2 Prologue to the Canterbury Tales: Introduction to the Author

Before William Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chaucer was the preeminent English poet, and he remains in the top tier of the English canon. He also was the most significant poet to write in Middle English. Chaucer was born in the early 1340s to a fairly rich, well-to-do, though not aristocratic family. His father, John Chaucer, was a vintner and deputy to the king's butler. His family's financial success came from work in the wine and leather businesses, and they had considerable inherited property in London. Little information exists about Chaucer's education, but his writings demonstrate a close familiarity with a number of important books of his contemporaries and of earlier times. Chaucer likely was fluent in several languages, including French, Italian, and Latin. Sons of wealthy London

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merchants could receive good educations at this time, and there is reason to believe that, if Chaucer did not attend one of the schools on Thames Street near his boyhood home, then he was at least well-educated at home. Certainly his work showcases a passion for reading a huge range of literature, classical and modern.

Chaucer first appears in public records in 1357 as a member of the house of Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster. This was a conventional arrangement in which sons of middle-class households were placed in royal service so that they could obtain a courtly education. Two years later, Chaucer served in the army under Edward III and was captured during an unsuccessful offensive at Reims, although he was later ransomed. Chaucer served under a number of diplomatic missions.

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. The Canterbury Tales is a collection of stories written in Middle English by
   (a) Geoffrey Chaucer (b) William Shakespeare
   (c) John Milton (d) John Keats
2. Chaucer drew from a rich variety of literature sources to create the
   (a) Stories (b) Articles
   (c) Tales (d) Nobel
3. The name of Geoffrey Chaucer is
   (a) William Chaucer (b) Duke Chaucer
   (c) Philippa Chaucer (d) John Chaucer
4. Chaucer first appears in public records in 1357 as a member of the house of
   (a) Edward (b) Elizabeth
   (c) Parliament (d) None of these
5. Chaucer first published work was
   (a) The book of the country (b) Courtly love
   (c) The book of the Duchess

By 1366 Chaucer had married Philippa Pan, who had been in service with the Countess of Ulster. Chaucer married well for his position, for Philippa Chaucer received an annuity from the queen consort of Edward III. Philippa's sister Katherine de Roet was John of Gaunt's mistress for twenty years before becoming the Duke's wife. Through this connection, John of Gaunt was Chaucer's "kinsman." Chaucer himself secured an annuity as yeoman of the king and was listed as one of the king's esquires.

Task Write brief introduction to the author of Canterbury Tales.

Chaucer's first published work was The Book of the Duchess, a poem of over 1,300 lines, supposed to be an elegy for Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster, addressed to her widower, the Duke. For this first of his important poems, which was published in 1370, Chaucer used the dream-vision form, a genre made popular by the highly influential 13th-century French poem of courtly love, the Roman de la Rose, which Chaucer translated into English. Throughout the following decade, Chaucer continued with his diplomatic career, traveling to Italy for negotiations to open a Genoa port to Britain as well as military negotiations with Milan. During his missions to Italy, Chaucer encountered the work of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, which were later to have profound influence upon his own writing. In 1374 Chaucer was appointed comptroller of the customs and subsidy of wool, skins, and tanned

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hides for the Port of London, his first position away from the British court. Chaucer's only major work during this period was House of Fame, a poem of around 2,000 lines in dream-vision form, which ends so abruptly that some scholars consider it unfinished.

Did u know? According to Derek Pearsall, "the one biographical fact everyone remembers about Chaucer" is his brush with the law, when, in a deed of May 1st 1380.

Derek Pearsall is released from culpability in the raptus or rape of Cecily Chaumpaigne. No-one knows exactly what the accusation-despite attempts to mistranslate "raptus" as "abduction" - precisely amounted to, still less whether it was rooted in truth. But it casts an ominous shadow over an otherwise pure-white biography, and, rather like the presence of the Pardoner and the Manciple in the Tales, gives a discordant dark wash to our image of Chaucer.

In October 1385, Chaucer was appointed a justice of the peace for Kent, and in August 1386 he became knight of the shire for Kent. Around the time of his wife's death in 1387, Chaucer moved to Greenwich and later to Kent. Changing political circumstances eventually led to Chaucer falling out of favor with the royal court and leaving Parliament, but when Richard II became King of England, Chaucer regained royal favor.

During this period Chaucer used writing primarily as an escape from public life. His works included Parlement of Foules, a poem of 699 lines. This work is a dream-vision for St. Valentine's Day that makes use of the myth that each year on that day the birds gathers before the goddess Nature to choose their mates. This work was heavily influenced by Boccaccio and Dante.

Chaucer's next work was Troilus and Criseyde, which was influenced by The Consolation of Philosophy, which Chaucer himself translated into English. Chaucer took some the plot of Troilus from Boccaccio's Filostrato. This 8,000-line rime-royal poem recounts the love story of Troilus, son of the Trojan king Priam, and Criseyde, widowed daughter of the deserter priest Calkas, against the background of the Trojan War.

The Canterbury Tales secured Chaucer's literary reputation. It is his great literary accomplishment, a compendium of stories by pilgrims traveling to the shrine of Thomas a Becket in Canterbury. Chaucer introduces each of these pilgrims in vivid, brief sketches in the General Prologue and intersperses the twenty-four tales with short dramatic scenes with lively exchanges. Chaucer did not complete the full plan for the tales, and surviving manuscripts leave some doubt as to the exact order of the tales that remain. However, the work is sufficiently complete to be considered a unified book rather than a collection of unfinished fragments. The Canterbury Tales is a lively mix of a variety of genres told by travelers from all aspects of society. Among the genres included are courtly romance, fabliaux, saint's biography, allegorical tale, beast fable, and medieval sermon.

Information concerning Chaucer's descendants is not fully clear. It is likely that he and Philippa had two sons and two daughters. Thomas Chaucer died in 1400; he was a large landowner and political officeholder, and his daughter, Alice, became Duchess of Suffolk. Little is known about Lewis Chaucer, Geoffrey Chaucer's youngest son. Of Chaucer's two daughters, Elizabeth became a nun, while Agnes was a lady-in-waiting for the coronation of Henry IV in 1399. Public records indicate that Chaucer had no descendants living after the fifteenth century.

Notes

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9.3 Summary

- The Canterbury Tales is a collection of stories written in Middle English by Geoffrey Chaucer at the end of the 14th century.
- The Canterbury Tales is at once one of the most famous and most frustrating works of literature ever written.
- The text of the Tales itself does not survive complete, but in ten fragments.
- Geoffrey Chaucer was the preeminent English poet, and he remains in the top tier of the English canon.
- Chaucer first appears in public records in 1357 as a member of the house of Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster.

9.4 Keywords

Comptroller : A controller used in the title of some financial officers.

Magnum Opus : A work of art, music or literature that is regarded as the most important or best work that an artist, composer or writer has produced.

Pilgrim : A person who journeys to a sacred place for religious reasons.

Shrine : A place regarded as holy because of its associations with a divinity or a scared person.

9.5 Review Questions

1. Describe the Introduction to the text, the Canterbury Tales.
2. Write an essay on the biography of Geoffrey Chaucer.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. (a)
2. (c)
3. (d)
4. (b)
5. (c)

Notes

9.6 Further Readings

Books

The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales	— Geoffrey Chaucer
The Canterbury Tales	— Geoffrey Chaucer
Geoffrey Chaucer	— Harold Bloom

Online links

http://pinkmonkey.com/booknotes/barrons/cntrtal03.asp

http://www.pinkmonkey.com/booknotes/monkeynotes/pmCanterbury12.asp

Notes

Unit 10: John Keats: Ode on a Grecian Urn, Ode to a Nightingale and Ode to Autumn

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain briefly the text, theme and summary of the poem Ode on Grecian urn
- Explain briefly the text, theme and summary of the poem Ode to a Nightingale
- Explain briefly the text, theme and summary of the poem Ode to Autumn
- Discuss the detailed analysis of all poems.

Introduction

John Keats was an English Romantic poet. Along with Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, he was one of the key figures in the second generation of the Romantic movement, despite the fact that his work had been in publication for only four years before his death. Although his poems were not generally well received by critics during his life, his reputation grew after his death to the extent that by the end of the 19th century he had become one of the most beloved of all English poets. He has had a significant influence on a diverse range of later poets and writers: Jorge Luis Borges stated that his first encounter with Keats was the most significant literary experience of his life.

The poetry of Keats is characterized by sensual imagery, most notably in the series of odes. Today his poems and letters are some of the most popular and analyzed in English literature. 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' was the third of the five 'great odes' of 1819, which are generally believed to have been written in the following order - Psyche, Nightingale, Grecian Urn, Melancholy, and Autumn. Of the five, Grecian Urn and Melancholy are merely dated '1819'. Critics have used vague references in Keats's letters as well as thematic progression to assign order. This ode contains the most discussed two lines in all of Keats's poetry - "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," - that is all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

The exact meaning of those lines is disputed by everyone; no less a critic than TS Eliot considered them a blight upon an otherwise beautiful poem. Scholars have been unable to agree to whom the last thirteen lines of the poem are addressed. Arguments can be made for any of the four most obvious possibilities, -poet to reader, urn to reader, poet to urn, poet to figures on the urn. The issue is further confused by the change in quotation marks between the original manuscript copy of the ode and the 1820 published edition.

10.1 Ode on a Grecian Urn

10.1.1 Text

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Notes

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
  Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
  Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
  Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
    Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;
  She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
    For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
  Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
  For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
  For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
    For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
  That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
    A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
  To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
  And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
  Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
    Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
  Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
    Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
  Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
  Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
  When old age shall this generation waste,

Notes

Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

10.1.2 Summary

In the first stanza, the speaker stands before an ancient Grecian urn and addresses it. He is preoccupied with its depiction of pictures frozen in time. It is the "still unravish'd bride of quietness," the "foster-child of silence and slow time." He also describes the urn as a "historian" that can tell a story. He wonders about the figures on the side of the urn and asks what legend they depict and from where they come. He looks at a picture that seems to depict a group of men pursuing a group of women and wonders what their story could be: "What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape? / What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?"

Task What makes the speaker question the Urn in the first stanza? What state of mind does keat's poem seems designed to bring about?

In the second stanza, the speaker looks at another picture on the urn, this time of a young man playing a pipe, lying with his lover beneath a glade of trees. The speaker says that the piper's "unheard" melodies are sweeter than mortal melodies because they are unaffected by time. He tells the youth that, though he can never kiss his lover because he is frozen in time, he should not grieve, because her beauty will never fade. In the third stanza, he looks at the trees surrounding the lovers and feels happy that they will never shed their leaves. He is happy for the piper because his songs will be "for ever new," and happy that the love of the boy and the girl will last forever, unlike mortal love, which lapses into "breathing human passion" and eventually vanishes, leaving behind only a "burning forehead, and a parching tongue."

In the fourth stanza, the speaker examines another picture on the urn, this one of a group of villagers leading a heifer to be sacrificed. He wonders where they are going ("To what green altar, O mysterious priest...") and from where they have come. He imagines their little town, empty of all its citizens, and tells it that its streets will "for evermore" be silent, for those who have left it, frozen on the urn, will never return. In the final stanza, the speaker again addresses the urn itself, saying that it, like Eternity, "doth tease us out of thought." He thinks that when his generation is long dead, the urn will remain, telling future generations its enigmatic lesson: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." The speaker says that is the only thing the urn knows and the only thing it needs to know.

10.1.3 Form

"Ode on a Grecian Urn" follows the same ode-stanza structure as the "Ode on Melancholy," though it varies more the rhyme scheme of the last three lines of each stanza. Each of the five stanzas in "Grecian Urn" is ten lines long, metered in a relatively precise iambic pentameter, and divided into a two part rhyme scheme, the last three lines of which are variable. The first seven lines of each stanza follow an ABABCDE rhyme scheme, but the second occurrences of the CDE sounds do not follow the same order. In stanza one, lines seven through ten are rhymed DCE; in stanza two, CED; in stanzas three and four, CDE; and in stanza five, DCE, just as in stanza one. As in other odes (especially "Autumn" and "Melancholy"), the two-part rhyme scheme (the first part made of AB rhymes, the second of CDE rhymes) creates the sense of a two-part thematic structure as well. The first four lines of each stanza roughly define the subject of the stanza, and the last six roughly explicate or develop it. (As in other odes, this is only a general rule, true of some stanzas more than others; stanzas such as the fifth do not connect rhyme scheme and thematic structure closely at all.)

Notes

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. In 1999, ... claimed that the poem "Tells a story that cannot be developed.
   (a) Harry Patch (b) Andrew Motion
   (c) Carol Ann Duffy (d) England
2. This posed a problem for the ....., who were prone to closely reading a poem's text.
   (a) Literary criticism (b) New historicism
   (c) New criticism (d) Literary theory
3. It is one of his "Great odes of 1819", which include ....., ode on Melancholy, ode to a Nightingale and ode to Psyche.
   (a) Ode on a Grecian Urn (b) Romantic poetry
   (c) Negative capability (d) Ode on Indolence
4. The technique of the poem is ....., the poetic representation of a painting or sculpture in words.
   (a) Aristotle (b) Ekphrasis
   (c) Poetry (d) Homer
5. There is a hint of a ..... in that indulgence causes someone to be filled with desire and that music without a sound is desired by the soul.
   (a) Aristotle (b) Paradox
   (c) Bertrand Russell (d) Ambiguity

10.1.4 Themes

If the "Ode to a Nightingale" portrays Keats's speaker's engagement with the fluid expressiveness of music, the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" portrays his attempt to engage with the static immobility of sculpture. The Grecian urn, passed down through countless centuries to the time of the speaker's viewing, exists outside of time in the human sense—it does not age, it does not die, and indeed it is alien to all such concepts. In the speaker's meditation, this creates an intriguing paradox for the human figures carved into the side of the urn: They are free from time, but they are simultaneously frozen in time. They do not have to confront aging and death (their love is "for ever young"), but neither can they have experience (the youth can never kiss the maiden; the figures in the procession can never return to their homes).

The speaker attempts three times to engage with scenes carved into the urn; each time he asks different questions of it. In the first stanza, he examines the picture of the "mad pursuit" and wonders what actual story lies behind the picture: "What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?" Of course, the urn can never tell him the whos, whats, whens, and wheres of the stories it depicts, and the speaker is forced to abandon this line of questioning.

In the second and third stanzas, he examines the picture of the piper playing to his lover beneath the trees. Here, the speaker tries to imagine what the experience of the figures on the urn must be like; he tries to identify with them. He is tempted by their escape from temporality and attracted to the eternal newness of the piper's unheard song and the eternally unchanging beauty of his lover. He thinks that their love is "far above" all transient human passion, which, in its sexual expression, inevitably leads to an abatement of intensity—when passion is satisfied, all that remains is a wearied physicality: a sorrowful heart, a "burning forehead," and a "parching tongue."

Notes

Notes The speaker recollection of these conditions seems to remind the speaker that he is inescapably subject to them, and he abandons his attempt to identify with the figures on the urn.

In the fourth stanza, the speaker attempts to think about the figures on the urn as though they were experiencing human time, imagining that their procession has an origin (the "little town") and a destination (the "green altar"). But all he can think is that the town will forever be deserted: If these people have left their origin, they will never return to it. In this sense he confronts head-on the limits of static art; if it is impossible to learn from the urn the whos and wheres of the "real story" in the first stanza, it is impossible ever to know the origin and the destination of the figures on the urn in the fourth.

It is true that the speaker shows a certain kind of progress in his successive attempts to engage with the urn. His idle curiosity in the first attempt gives way to a more deeply felt identification in the second, and in the third, the speaker leaves his own concerns behind and thinks of the processional purely on its own terms, thinking of the "little town" with a real and generous feeling. But each attempt ultimately ends in failure. The third attempt fails simply because there is nothing more to say—once the speaker confronts the silence and eternal emptiness of the little town, he has reached the limit of static art; on this subject, at least, there is nothing more the urn can tell him.

In the final stanza, the speaker presents the conclusions drawn from his three attempts to engage with the urn. He is overwhelmed by its existence outside of temporal change, with its ability to "tease" him "out of thought / As doth eternity." If human life is a succession of "hungry generations," as the speaker suggests in "Nightingale," the urn is a separate and self-contained world. It can be a "friend to man," as the speaker says, but it cannot be mortal; the kind of aesthetic connection the speaker experiences with the urn is ultimately insufficient to human life.

The final two lines, in which the speaker imagines the urn speaking its message to mankind—"Beauty is truth, truth beauty," have proved among the most difficult to interpret in the Keats canon. After the urn utters the enigmatic phrase "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," no one can say for sure who "speaks" the conclusion, "that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." It could be the speaker addressing the urn, and it could be the urn addressing mankind. If it is the speaker addressing the urn, then it would seem to indicate his awareness of its limitations: The urn may not need to know anything beyond the equation of beauty and truth, but the complications of human life make it impossible for such a simple and self-contained phrase to express sufficiently anything about necessary human knowledge. If it is the urn addressing mankind, then the phrase has rather the weight of an important lesson, as though beyond all the complications of human life, all human beings need to know on earth is that beauty and truth are one and the same. It is largely a matter of personal interpretation which reading to accept.

10.1.5 Detailed Analysis

A man is whispering sweet nothings to a Grecian urn, an ancient Greek pot that is covered in illustrations. He thinks the pot is married to a guy named "Quietness," but they haven't had sex yet, so the marriage isn't official. He also thinks that the urn is the adopted child of "Silence" and "Slow Time."

Then the speaker gives us the urn's profession: it's a "historian," and it does a much better job of telling stories than the speaker possibly could. The speaker looks closer at the urn and tries to figure out what's going on in the pictures that are painted on it. Illustrated on the urn is some kind of story that might involve gods, men, or both. It looks like a bunch of guys are chasing beautiful women through the forest. People are playing pipes and beating on drums. Everyone looks happy. The scene is chaotic and the speaker doesn't know quite what's happening.

Notes

Not only is the urn a better storyteller than the poet, but the musicians in the illustration have sweeter melodies than the poet. The poet then tries to listen to the music played by the people in the image. That's right: even though he can't hear the music with his ears, he's trying to listen to it with his "spirit." He looks at the illustration of a young guy who is playing a song under a tree. Because pictures don't change, the man will be playing his song as long as the urn survives, and the tree will always be full and green.

Then the speaker addresses one of the guys who is chasing a maiden, and he offers some advice: "You're never going to make out with that girl, because you're in a picture, and pictures don't change, but don't worry – at least you'll always be in love with her, because you're in a picture, and pictures don't change."

The speaker thinks about how happy the trees must be to keep all their leaves forever. It's always springtime in the world of the urn, and every song sounds fresh and new. Then he starts talking about love and repeats the word "happy" a bunch of times. He is jealous of the lovers on the urn, because they will always be lusting after each other. He thinks the best part of being in love is trying to get your lover to hook up with you, and not the part that follows. We're starting to think that the speaker needs a cold shower.

Did u know? The word "panting" threatens to send the poem careening into X-rated territory.

Things were getting a bit steamy, but now the speaker has moved to a different section of the urn. He's looking at an illustration of an animal sacrifice. This is pretty much the cold shower he needed. A priest is leading a cow to be sacrificed. People have come from a nearby town to watch. The speaker imagines that it's a holy day, so the town has been emptied out for the sacrifice. The town will always be empty, because it's a picture, and pictures don't change.

The speaker starts freaking out a bit. He's basically yelling at the urn now. Whereas before he was really excited about the idea of living in the eternal world of the illustrations, now he's not so sure. Something about it seems "cold" to him. He thinks about how, when everyone he knows is dead, the urn will still be around, telling its story to future generations. The urn is a teacher and friend to mankind. It repeats the same lesson to every generation: that truth and beauty are the same thing, and this knowledge is all we need to make it through life.

Stanza I Summary

Line 1

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,

Keats talks to the urn as if it were a beautiful woman, like many people do nowadays with their cars. He calls her the "unravish'd bride of quietness," which, if taken literally, would mean that the urn is married to a guy named Quietness. But urns can't get married, so he probably just means a really old pot and quietness go hand in hand. Imagine the speaker standing in some big, empty room of a museum, and it's easy to see where the quietness thing comes from.

What about "still unravish'd"? It might not seem like it on the surface, but this is a sexy poem. The word "ravish" means to take or carry away something by force, and, more directly, it means to have violent, passionate sex with someone. The writers of bodice-ripper romance novels love the word "ravish."

But this urn hasn't been ravished – yet. Even though "she" is married to quietness, they haven't consummated the marriage by having sex. It looks youthful and pure, even though it's really old.

If you think the whole sex-and-marriage metaphor for a pot doesn't make much sense, you're not alone. But you have to admit that it sounds cool. If you want to boil the first line down to something very simple, he's saying that the urn has lived its life in "quietness," in a museum or buried in some Greek ruins, but it's still in great condition and hasn't suffered any major damage.

Notes

Line 2

Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,

The urn is called the "foster-child" of Silence and slow Time. A "foster-child" is a kid who is adopted and raised by people other than his or her own parents.

In this case, the urn has been adopted by "Silence" and "slow Time," which, if anything, sounds like an even more boring couple than Mrs. Urn and Mr. Quietness.

The point is that the pot is thousands of years old, and it has spent most of its time buried in ruble or tucked away in the corner of some museum or some private collector's house. But these were not its "original" circumstances.

The true "parent" of the urn would have been the Greek artist who created it. Furthermore, the pot might have had a ceremonial use rather than just being a pretty thing to look at.

But after the decline of Greek civilization, the pot lived on to age in silence, outside of the vibrant culture in which he was created.

Lines 3-4

Sylvan historian, who canst thus express

A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:

So far, the speaker has addressed the urn by a bunch of different names and titles. It's like saying, "You, John Doe, husband of Jane Doe, son of Susie and Richard Doe, lawyer at the firm of . . ." Now this line gives us the urn's job or profession, which is "Sylvan historian."

Bet you've never seen that one on a business card, huh? "Sylvan" is a just a word derived from Latin that refers to woods or forests. This makes the urn a historian of people who live in forests. It's a storyteller (the word "history" is derived from a Latin word for "story" or "tale"), and a darn good one.

In fact, the urn is a better storyteller than the poet.

The urn tells stories using pictures, while the poet uses "rhymes." The tale told by the urn is "flowery" and "sweet," as if you could bury your nose in it like a bee inside a daffodil.

This is appropriate, because this particular urn depicts scenes that are set in nature. Moreover, "flowery" works as a pun. A tale is "flowery" if it's complicated and has a lot of ins and outs.

But the story told on an urn is also "flowery" in a more literal sense: the illustrations on urns were often framed by a pattern of leaves or flowers.

Line 5-7

What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape

Of deities or mortals, or of both,

In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?

This is the point when our speaker leans in to take a closer look at the urn. He's trying to figure what's going on in the carved pictures that encircle it.

We got the flowers in line 4, and now we get the leaves. The story or "legend" on the pot is "leaf-fringed," which builds on the idea of the "Sylvan" or forest historian.

But this "legend" suddenly sounds a lot like a ghost story: it "haunts." This is another pun, because "haunt" can just mean to exist in a certain place, but it has that obvious connection to the dead. Indeed, we would expect that all the characters of a story that was first told thousands of years ago would be dead by now.

And who are these characters, the speaker is wondering. Are they gods ("deities") or just normal human beings ("mortals")?

Notes

In Ancient Greece, all the gods were represented as looking like people, so you wouldn't always be able to tell the difference between them and people in a picture. The gods also liked to hang out with humans.

Needless to say, it's hard to tell if these people are mere mortals or gods.

The speaker is also wondering where the story takes place.

With his knowledge of Ancient Greece, he throws out a couple of names as guesses: Tempe and "Arcady," or Arcadia. (A "dale" is just a valley.)

Line 8-10

What men or gods are these? what maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Keats is playing a clever trick here. Under the guise of having the speaker try to figure out what's on the pictures, Keats is really telling us about the story.

The speaker repeats the question about "deities or mortals" in more causal language: are they "men or gods"?

Here it helps to have a little background into a very common Ancient Greek theme: a bunch of lustful guys chasing a bunch of nice girls around and trying to get some action. Very often the males would be half-man, half-goat-type creatures called "satyrs," but Keats doesn't mention anything about satyrs so we can't jump to that conclusion.

If you want to have a more sinister interpretation, you can imagine that the women are being chased against their will.

We're going to give these couples the benefit of the doubt, though, and imagine that the women are just being playful.

They are "loth," or "loath," to have sex, which means they are reluctant, but it could just be a teasing reluctance.

In the picture, the guys are chasing the women in "mad pursuit," which the women "struggle to escape."

This cat-and-mouse scenario seems to be a game. It wouldn't make much sense to depict a serious chase scene and then include people playing instruments like "pipes and timbrels" (a timbrel is like a tambourine).

On the whole, everyone looks happy. But not just happy as in simply content.

We're talking rowdy, crazy, best-party-of-my-life happiness. We're talking "wild ecstasy." Everyone is running around and dancing.

Stanza II Summary

Lines 11-12

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard

Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;

In this stanza, the speaker seems to have moved on to another of the pictures on the side of the urn.

As in the first scene, there is music playing. The music is being played on "pipes," which is like a primitive version of a flute. Unlike the wild party music of the first stanza, these pipes are "soft."

The speaker arrives at a totally counter-intuitive conclusion. He says that the melodies you don't hear are "sweeter" than those you do.

Notes

This claim is a paradox: it doesn't seem to make sense. No one listens to their music player with the volume at zero so they can "imagine" the music they aren't hearing.

This is the first example of a trick that Keats is going to play over and over again for the rest of the poem.

He treats the scenes on the urn as if they were real places and events, and not just a depiction of a place. Real people are actually "living" on the urn, but they are frozen in time.

The pipe-player actually is playing a song, but you can't hear the song because urns don't make sounds. The speaker is imagining what the song would song like, and he thinks this imaginary song inside his head is better than anything he has heard with his ears.

In other words, he prefers to the world of fantasy to the physical world.

He tells the "soft pipes" to keep playing, even though he's the one who is making the pipes play, by imagining them.

In this sense, it's almost like he's talking to himself. He is both musician and audience.

Lines 13-14

Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,

Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:

The speaker is still giving orders that only he can obey. He tells the pipes not to play to his "sensual" or physical ear, but to the metaphorical ear of his "spirit," or imagination. This spiritual ear is "more endear'd," or cherished, than his flesh-and-blood ears.

As if that weren't strange enough, he asks the pipes to play "ditties of no tone," that is, songs that don't have any notes or sounds, at least in the real world. Imaginary songs.

Lines 15-16

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave

Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;

The identity of our mysterious musician revealed! It was Colonel Mustard in the Conservatory with the Lead Pipe. It was a good-looking young guy ("fair youth") sitting under the trees, and his pipe was probably made of wood.

Here comes Keats's trick again. He treats the urn like a real place, and because this place never changes, it means that the guy under the tree will always be playing the same song, in the same pose forever!

It's like Bill Murray's life in Groundhog Day, but with even less variety.

But for the speaker, this is actually a good thing. Because the seasons never change, the weather will always be nice and the trees will never be "bare," without leaves.

It's Eden. Eternal spring.

Line 17

Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,

Now he turns back to the first scene, the guys chasing the women, and he starts talking to one of the guys.

He calls him "bold," presumably because he has taken the initiative the chase his lady around the forest. In modern-day terms, he's like a guy who is never afraid to ask for a girl's number.

To paraphrase, the speaker says, "I know you're hoping to make it with that nice girl you're chasing, but I've got bad news for you: It's not going to happen. Ever. I don't think you realize this, but you

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live on an urn, you're just a picture, and you can never move or change. But there's a definite upside to the situation: you'll always feel just as strongly about her, and she'll always be really beautiful.

This is an absurd thing to say, and it tells us more about the speaker than it does about the lover. The speaker wants to imagine a world in which nothing changes and good things never come to an end.

The speaker isn't the most tactful guy in the world, and he repeats the word "never" twice as if to rub in the bad news. He also describes the chase scene as if it were an athletic race, for which having sex is considered "winning." It's like the Romantic poetry equivalent of locker-room banter.

Stanza III Summary

Lines 21-22

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed

Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;

The branches of the trees never lose their leaves because the world of the urn never changes.

The urn is to the Ancient Greek world what a Norman Rockwell painting is to 1950s America: it captures a moment in time in which everything seems to be wholesome and happy.

In this case, it's always springtime, and the trees are always green.

After repeating the word "never" twice in line 17, the speaker seems to have decided that repeating words is his new thing, and he does it a bunch of times in this stanza. He uses the word, "happy," twice in a row in line 21. He also continues to talk to objects that can't respond to him, like the "boughs" or branches of the trees depicted on the urn.

Finally, he continues to treat the urn as a real place, and one where things never change.

To bid "adieu" is to say "goodbye" in French with the expectation that you won't see someone again for a long time. If someone goes down the street to the corner store, you say "au revoir," but if someone moves to another state, you say "adieu."

Fortunately for the tree branches, they never have to say goodbye to the Spring, which will never be replaced by summer in this world.

Some readers have thought that the repeated use of the word "happy" smacks of desperation on the part of the speaker, as if he were trying to convince himself that eternal springtime would be a great thing, rather than a huge snooze-fest.

After all, how long can you sit around looking at tree leaves?

Lines 23-24

And, happy melodist, unwearied,

For ever piping songs for ever new;

These lines make us think that the speaker is still talking about the second scene of the urn: the young musician playing the pipes under a tree.

Now he calls him a "melodist." Unlike, say, the piano, you can't play both melody and harmony on the pipes. You have to pick one, and the most obvious choice is to play a melody.

The "melodist," you probably won't be shocked to learn, is also "happy," like everyone else in this world. He is also "unwearied," which means he never gets tired.

In your version of the poem, you might notice that the word has an accent at the end, so that it reads, "un-wear-i-ed." What's that about? It means that Keats wants you to pronounce the word with four syllables, instead of three.

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He does this to preserve a perfect ten-syllable iambic pentameter, which you can read more about in the "Form and Meter" section.

But you can think of the accent as being like a notation on a piece of sheet music, which might be important in light of the fact that the speaker is talking about music at this point. Is he comparing himself with the "happy melodist"? We think so.

In line 24 the speaker says that the songs played by the musician are always fresh and new. Again, that's because the world of the urn never changes.

It would be as if our world froze while you were listening to the radio, so whatever was on the Top-40 station would always be considered hip and catchy.

Of course, in the real world, we know that most pop songs don't last in the Top-40 for more than a few weeks. We get sick of the old songs and crave new ones, which is why there will always be a need for young teen pop stars to replace the older teen pop stars of the year before.

Line 25

More happy love! more happy, happy love!

This is the place where a lot of readers think the speaker starts to go off in his own world.

Three "happy" in one line? We imagine our speaker is the kind of person who puts 25 packets of sugar into their iced tea. In case you hadn't noticed, he likes sweet things. But do these "happy" thoughts have any substance?

If you want to be less cynical, you could also read these lines as the speaker encouraging the musician to keep playing by calling for more songs.

He thinks the music and "love" go hand in hand, so more music means more love. He's like the crowd at a concert clapping its hands and shouting, "Another! Two more songs! Ten more songs!"

Line 26-27

For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,

For ever panting, and for ever young;

The birds and the bees. When it comes to sex, lots of people think that the most exciting part is definitely before the act itself. It is the time of attraction and pursuit.

By contrast, "after" is the time when people often wonder what they were so worked up about. On a longer time scale, the same holds true for love affairs. They are usually most exciting in the beginning, before things settle down into a routine.

The speaker seems to have returned to the first image on the urn, that of the "men or gods" chasing a bunch of women, and he imagines that everyone in the scene is at the peak of their erotic excitement.

The men are just about the catch the women, but they haven't yet, so they always have the big moment ahead of them.

Line 26 refers to the bodies of the women, which are "warm and still to be enjoy'd."

Line 27 refers to both men and women, who are "panting" from their chase.

Keeping in his mode of repetition, the speaker keeps using the words "for ever" to make the point that the people on the urn are frozen in time. The world of art is eternal.

We're now going to argue in favor of a different interpretation. Our speaker is showing definite symptoms of sexual excitement himself, like the pulsating rhythm of his speech and the repetition of his words (being sexually excited isn't the most creative human state). He might need a cold shower.

Notes

Lines 28-30

All breathing human passion far above,

That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,

A burning forehead and a parching tongue.

Line 28 has somewhat awkward grammar. Generations of readers have not known what to make of these lines. Line 27 told us about the "panting" of the lovers, but now these lines might suggest that the lovers are better than or "far above" the "breathing human passion" of the normal world.

That's one interpretation. But here's a different one.

In this second interpretation, "far above" refers to the perspective of the speaker, our excited guy who is "breathing" on the display case at the museum as he salivates over the urn.

The word "all" suggests that the speaker knows he belongs to a much wider and more populous world than the people on the urn. In other words, the urn is like a tiny planet that is frozen in time while all around it people are moving and breathing and carrying on with their lives.

So if the speaker represents the "human passion" that looks down on this little world from "far above," then line 29 must refer to his "heart," not just any old heart.

When he looks at the happy lovers, the speaker's heart becomes "high-sorrowful and cloy'd." In other words, he feels a dramatic, woe-is-me kind of sadness.

To be "cloy'd" is to have too much of a good thing. The speaker is overpowered by his excitement, and instead of a warm and pleasant "panting," he feels feverish, with a "burning forehead," and desperately thirsty, with "a parching of tongue."

He's like a guy stuck in the desert. But instead of water, he craves love.

Stanza IV Summary

Line 31

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?

Just when we thought the speaker might faint from the steamy, sticky atmosphere of the lovers, he manages to turn his attention to other things.

Now the speaker is looking at the third scene on the urn, which depicts an animal sacrifice.

Just as in stanza I, the speaking is leaning in and trying to figure out what is going on in the scene. In stanza I he asked "What," and now he asks, "Who?" There seem to be people coming to watch the sacrifice.

Line 32-34

To what green altar, O mysterious priest,

Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,

And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?

Now our speaker talks to the priest on the urn, asking him, "Hey, where are you headed?"

He wants to know to "what green altar" he is taking a cow ("heifer").

In classical times, an altar was a place where sacrifices were carried out, and this one is covered with leaves and vegetation that make it green. The poor cow must know what's coming, because it moans or "lows" at the sky.

Its sides ("flanks") are dressed in a string or "garland" of flowers. This cow is a holy object, destined for the Gods.

Notes

Lines 35-37

What little town by river or sea shore,

Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,

Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?

We can now piece together the whole third scene. There's a priest, a cow, a green altar, and a crowd of people following behind in anticipation of the sacrifice.

The speaker infers that this crowd must have come from somewhere, from some "little town," but the town isn't depicted, so he has to imagine what it must look like.

He imagines things in the world of the urn just like we, the readers, imagine what is going on in the poem. Very curious.

This scene doesn't have anything besides people and cows in it, but he comes up with a few guesses as to what the town looks like. It is either a.) By a river, b.) By a sea-shore, or c.) On a mountain.

If it's on a mountain, he imagines a small fortress called a "citadel" must protect it. But there isn't a great need to be defended, so the citadel is "peaceful."

This truly is a perfect world. Everyone is outside, enjoying the weather and looking forward to the ritual. The town is "emptied" because it is a "pious" or holy morning.

Lines 38-40

And, little town, thy streets for evermore

Will silent be; and not a soul to tell

Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

The speaker talks to the town to inform it that its streets will always be "silent" and "desolate" of people.

Although the speaker knows that everyone is headed to a sacrifice, he doesn't know what the sacrifice is for, and he can never find out because there is "not a soul, to tell" the reason for the holy day.

Stanza V Summary

Lines 41-43

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede

Of marble men and maidens overwrought,

With forest branches and the trodden weed;

Compared to the steamy stanza III, stanza IV was a mellow, low-key affair. But in the last stanza the speaker suddenly gets excited again.

It's like someone stuck a shot of adrenaline in his arm. He starts yelling about the beautiful appearance of the urn, as if noticing it for the first time.

He has raptures over its "Attic shape," which just means it has a distinctively Greek appearance, and its "fair attitude," which means a graceful posture. (A "brede" is a braid, like a braid of hair.)

The lovers are "braided" together in the chiseled marble, which is a wild image. It makes the carving sound complicated and ornate.

Indeed, the speaker calls the depiction "overwrought," or too complicated.

There's just too much detail and craftsmanship. This might remind us of the use of the word "cloy'd" in stanza III, another occasion where the speaker thought that the urn's artistry was just too rich.

Notes

We already mentioned that the urn has decorative images of plants all over it, and now the speaker is annoyed with the "forest branches" and the "trodden weed" that seem to be choking the poem with vegetation. They get in the way and make the urn look crowded.

He's starting to have some serious mixed feelings about this urn. He praises it and disuses it within two lines. He's basically saying, "You have a nice body, but you're trying way too hard to look fancy."

Lines 44-45

> Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
>
> As doth eternity: Cold pastoral!

If you thought his feelings were mixed before, these lines will really throw you for a loop.

He starts out by pointing his finger at the urn: "You! That's right. You, the quiet one." So far, it's been a fairly one-sided conversation (that tends to happen with inanimate objects), and now he's trying to get the urn to be more involved.

He says that the urn is so mysterious and baffling that it's impossible to think about.

Our speaker uses the word "tease," which has at least two meanings. The first is the one we're familiar with: mockery. The second is to separate or disentangle, like you might "tease" apart the nest of wires behind your computer.

We think this second meaning is actually the primary one here. The poet compares the experience of looking at the urn to thinking about eternity, an idea so lofty and hard to understand that trying to think about it is like not thinking at all.

The speaker has been setting up this comparison between the world of the urn and eternity for the entire poem. He views the urn as a world where things never change and can never be destroyed, which is pretty much the definition of eternity. Except, of course, if the urn breaks.

Finally, he calls the scenes depicted on the urn a "Cold Pastoral." Pastoral imagery concerns nature and simple country life, so it's an appropriate word in the context of images of peaceful towns, young lovers, and bright, green trees.

But "cold"? Are these lines supposed to be a put-down, or are they actually a form of praise. They sound more like a put-down – like the speaker changed his mind after all his talk about happiness and warm bodies. He might be accusing the urn of being distant and uncaring.

But maybe he likes how the world of the urn seems so foreign from human life that it's hard to even think about.

You might compare the feeling to looking at remote stars and planets, which seem cold and indifferent but also provide a sense of beauty and comfort.

Overall, it seems he understands the urn even less at the end of the poem than at the beginning.

Lines 46-48

> When old age shall this generation waste,
>
> Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
>
> Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,

"Old age" like the villain with a flamethrower in an action movie to "waste" an entire generation of people – the speaker's generation.

The speaker imagines that after everyone in his generation is dead, the urn will still be around.

The problems or "woe" of the present generation will have been replaced by new problems. But the urn, like a good therapist and "a friend of man," won't be lacking in advice to give new generations. In fact, it has always given the same advice to everyone, throughout history, which is.

Notes

Lines 49-50

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'—that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Beauty and truth is the same thing. That makes no sense at all. If beauty and truth is the same thing, then why do we have two different words for them?

One of the sneakiest things about these lines is how they sound so darned confident, as if "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" were on a par with "Gravity makes things fall down."

We want to respond: "First of all, we didn't already know that beauty and truth were that same thing. Second, if you think we already knew that, why are you telling us? Third, why do you think this is all we 'need to know.' How does this information help us, at all?"

To our knowledge, the urn has yet to respond to our inquiry. But we can try to say a bit about what these lines could mean.

To say that beauty and truth are the same thing has usually been taken to mean that there is no truth outside of art. We're talking about big truths, like meaning-of-life truths.

We also think he's using "beauty" to refer to more than just pretty pictures and writings. He's referring to anything that gives us that sense of grandeur and a meaning larger than ourselves, including the art of the universe: nature.

Truth is not something that can be "thought." It's too remote and complicated, like the idea of eternity. It can only be felt.

The speaker thinks that we don't need truths that can be expressed in words. The experience of beauty is enough. Enough for what? Well, perhaps to lead a good, fulfilling, meaningful life. There are lots of things we'd like to know about the world, like why suffering exists. But we don't need to know such things. Beauty is the only absolutely necessary idea.

This last point is actually super-radical, and it's what makes Keats one of the most Romantic of the Romantics. If you take it to the extreme, you don't need any of the truths of religious or philosophical texts, history books, celebrity magazines, or wherever else people get their ideas. You don't need truths that are passed down through tradition.

Needless to stay, British conservatives hated Keats, whom they considered a wild-eyed liberal, which he kind of was.

You may just want to throw up your hands and decide these lines are absurd. You'd be in good company. T.S. Eliot, a poet, was never shy about voicing his opinions.

But for many people, they express truth in exactly the way they suggest: not with some kind of intellectual argument, but through their rhythm and melody – their beauty.

10.2 Ode to a Nightingale

10.2.1 Text

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains

My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,

Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains

One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:

'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,

But being too happy in thine happiness,

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That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet

Notes

Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

Notes

10.2.2 Summary

The speaker opens with a declaration of his own heartache. He feels numb, as though he had taken a drug only a moment ago. He is addressing a nightingale he hears singing somewhere in the forest and says that his "drowsy numbness" is not from envy of the nightingale's happiness, but rather from sharing it too completely; he is "too happy" that the nightingale sings the music of summer from amid some unseen plot of green trees and shadows.

In the second stanza, the speaker longs for the oblivion of alcohol, expressing his wish for wine, "a draught of vintage," that would taste like the country and like peasant dances, and let him "leave the world unseen" and disappear into the dim forest with the nightingale. In the third stanza, he explains his desire to fade away, saying he would like to forget the troubles the nightingale has never known: "the weariness, the fever, and the fret" of human life, with its consciousness that everything is mortal and nothing lasts. Youth "grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies," and "beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes."

In the fourth stanza, the speaker tells the nightingale to fly away, and he will follow, not through alcohol ("Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards"), but through poetry, which will give him "viewless wings." He says he is already with the nightingale and describes the forest glade, where even the moonlight is hidden by the trees, except the light that breaks through when the breezes blow the branches. In the fifth stanza, the speaker says that he cannot see the flowers in the glade, but can guess them "in embalmed darkness": white hawthorne, eglantine, violets, and the musk-rose, "the murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves." In the sixth stanza, the speaker listens in the dark to the nightingale, saying that he has often been "half in love" with the idea of dying and called Death soft names in many rhymes. Surrounded by the nightingale's song, the speaker thinks that the idea of death seems richer than ever, and he longs to "cease upon the midnight with no pain" while the nightingale pours its soul ecstatically forth. If he were to die, the nightingale would continue to sing, he says, but he would "have ears in vain" and be no longer able to hear.

In the seventh stanza, the speaker tells the nightingale that it is immortal, that it was not "born for death." He says that the voice he hears singing has always been heard, by ancient emperors and clowns, by homesick Ruth; he even says the song has often charmed open magic windows looking out over "the foam / Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn." In the eighth stanza, the word forlorn tolls like a bell to restore the speaker from his preoccupation with the nightingale and back into himself. As the nightingale flies farther away from him, he laments that his imagination has failed him and says that he can no longer recall whether the nightingale's music was "a vision, or a waking dream." Now that the music is gone, the speaker cannot recall whether he himself is awake or asleep.

Task How in Stanza 7, does the birds song lead the speaker beyond his immediate surroundings?

10.2.3 Form

Like most of the other odes, "Ode to a Nightingale" is written in ten-line stanzas. However, unlike most of the other poems, it is metrically variable—though not so much as "Ode to Psyche." The first seven and last two lines of each stanza are written in iambic pentameter; the eighth line of each stanza is written in trimeter, with only three accented syllables instead of five. "Nightingale" also differs from the other odes in that its rhyme scheme is the same in every stanza (every other ode varies the order of rhyme in the final three or four lines except "To Psyche," which has the loosest structure of all the odes).

Notes

Notes Each stanza in "Nightingale" is rhymed ABABCDECDE, Keats's most basic scheme throughout the odes.

10.2.4 Analysis

The poem begins as the speaker starts to feel disoriented from listening to the song of the nightingale, as if he had just drunken something really, really strong. He feels bittersweet happiness at the thought of the nightingale's carefree life.

Did u know? The speaker wishes he had a special wine distilled directly from the earth. He wants to drink such a wine and fade into the forest with the nightingale. He wants to escape the worries and concerns of life, age, and time.

He uses poetry to join the nightingale's nighttime world, deep in the dark forest where hardly any moonlight can reach. He can't see any of the flowers or plants around him, but he can smell them. He thinks it wouldn't be so bad to die at night in the forest, with no one around except the nightingale singing.

But the nightingale can't die. The nightingale must be immortal, because so many different kinds of generations of people have heard its song throughout history, everyone from clowns and emperors to Biblical characters to people in fantasy stories.

The speaker's vision is interrupted when the nightingale flies away and leaves him alone. He feels abandoned and disappointed that his imagination is not strong enough to create its own reality. He is left confused and bewildered, not knowing the difference between reality and dreams.

Stanza 1 Summary

Lines 1-2

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains

My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,

The speaker says that his heart hurts as if he has just drunken poison. "Hemlock" is the poison that the Greek philosopher Socrates took when he was put to death for corrupting the youth. The speaker feels woozy and numb, like when the dentist puts you on Novocain. Imagine him swaying back and forth, kind of drunk and out of it.

The "ache" in his heart almost sounds pleasurable, the way he describes it. Like when you hear a sad song you really love that just pierces your heart, and you're like, "This makes me so sad!" but if anyone tried to turn it off you'd throttle them.

Lines 3-4

Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains

One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:

"Poison" is a bit exaggerated. He's not dying, after all. He tries another approach to explain how he feels. He feels as though he has drank some powerful drug or painkiller ("opiate") that causes him to "sink" into a kind of oblivion.

Notes

In Greek mythology, "Lethe" was a river in Hades (the Underworld) that made people forget all their memories if they drank from it. There's really no way to dance around it: the speaker is comparing his feeling to being totally strung out on drugs.

"Opium" is a powerful drug made from the poppy flower, and it was all the rage among certain adventurous types in the 19th century. The poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, for example, was an opium addict, as was the writer Thomas de Quincy, who wrote an essay titled, "Confessions of an Opium Eater." This was before people discovered just how toxic opium is for the body.

Lines 5-6

'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,

But being too happy in thine happiness,

Now we know that the speaker must be addressing the nightingale of the title. He wants to clarify that the pain he feels is not because he is jealous of the bird's happiness. Instead, he is excessively happy for the bird's happiness. He's like that friend who bursts into tears when you share really good news and cries, "I'm just . . . so . . . happy . . . for you!" but you're not sure if they are really happy for you or just sad for themselves.

Lines 7-10

That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,

In some melodious plot

Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,

Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

And why is the nightingale so happy? Because it gets to sit in the trees all day and sing about summertime. It's to the trees what Jimmy Buffet is to the beach.

The nightingale is not a large bird, and it can fly, which seems like enough grounds to call it "light-winged" (which is pronounced with three syllables, by the way). And in Greek mythology, a "dryad" is a nymph (female spirit) that lives in the trees.

The bird makes whatever space or "plot" it inhabits "melodious," and this particular plot seems to have beech trees, giving it a "beechen green" color.

The nightingale doesn't hold back. It sings with a "full throat," like an opera singer in a solo. We imagine that this poem takes place in the peak of summer.

Stanza 2 Summary

Lines 11-12

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been

Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,

The speaker longs for a drink of wine or some other spirit that has been kept cool deep in the earth. "Vintage" wine is made from grapes from the same harvest, and people often refer to a particular year at a winery as a "vintage."

We have no explanation at this point for his sudden desire to get his drink on. He wants wine to just start bubbling up out of the ground, as if you could stick a tap right into the soil and let the good times flow.

Good wine needs to be kept cool, which is why people often store it in their cellars. According to Keats, the earth is like a giant wine cellar.

Notes

Lines 13-14

Tasting of Flora and the country green,

Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!

If you drink wine out of the earth, it's no surprise that it might taste like flowers ("Flora") and plants ("country green"). People sometimes jokingly say they want to "squeeze every last drop" out of the day, but the speaker seems to mean it literally.

Not only does the earth's wine taste like flowers, but it also tastes like dancing, song, and happiness ("sunburnt mirth"). Specifically, he is thinking of "Provencal," a region in the south of France known for its wine, sun, and a kind of poetic song known as "Troubadour poetry." Many Troubadours wrote poems addressed to an unattainable lover.

Lines 15-16

O for a beaker full of the warm South,

Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,

The speaker wants to stick the south of France or just the South in general, into a bottle ("beaker") and guzzle the whole thing down! He wants to distill the earth down to its powerful, intoxicating essence.

It's like when you go to the beach and wish you could just bottle the breezy ocean air to take back with you to school or the office. "Hippocrene" is a reference that there is no reason you should know – Keats is showing off his knowledge of Greek mythology again.

Hippocrene is the "fountain of the Muses," a group of eight women (again, in Greek mythology) who inspire struggling poets. The fountain bubbles up out of the earth where Pegasus, the famous flying horse, is supposed to have dug his hoof into the ground.

He wants to drink something that will make him a great poet…and that'll get him drunk. The liquid from the Hippocrene is "blushful" because it is reddish, the color of both wine and a blush.

Lines 17-18

With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,

And purple-stained mouth;

In delicious detail, the speaker describes the appearance of the wine. It has little bubbles at that burst, or "wink," at the brim of the beaker, like little eyes.

It also stains your mouth purple when you drink it, like any strong red wine will do.

Lines 19-20

That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,

And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

What does all this talk about wine, inspiration, and drunkenness have to do with the nightingale? What happened to that old bird?

The speaker sums up his intentions in these final two lines of the stanza. He wants to get drunk on this magical wine so that he can leave the "world" without anyone noticing and just "fade" into the dark forest with the nightingale.

But isn't the forest part of the "world"? Apparently not. By "world" he might mean the world of human society, work, responsibility, and all that. The nightingale lives apart from this world.

Putting aside all this business about Provencal and Hippocrene, the speaker wants to drink for the same reason many people drink: to forget his problems for a while and to have a more carefree state of mind.

Notes

Stanza 3 Summary

Lines 21-22

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget

What thou among the leaves hast never known,

A harp starts playing, and the dream sequence begins. The speaker dreams of "fading" out of the world, of just disappearing in a very quiet way. He wants to forget about those things that the nightingale has never had to worry about. Again, we don't know much about which things he means specifically, but we assume they must have to do with the stresses and cares of living in human society. The bird is free of such cares.

Lines 23-24

The weariness, the fever, and the fret

Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;

Why is he talking about these depressing things? It seems just he just can't leave the world behind. The world is full of tired and "weary" people, sickness ("fever"), and massive stress ("fret"). He reduces all of society down to one depressingly exaggerated image: people sitting around and listen to each other "groan" and complain.

That's a pretty bleak view of the world, but it just goes to show how much of an effect the nightingale has had on him. Compared to the nightingale's carefree song, our voices sound like groans.

Lines 25-26

Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,

Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;

He decides to take the whole depressing images thing to a new level, describing the world as a place where the uncontrollable movements of illness shake the "last gray hairs" on a dying man's head. Palsy is a disease the causes sudden involuntary movements, and so this gray-hair person is no long capable of controlling his own body.

He's also almost bald. In this section, Keats confronts one of his favorite enemies: time. After you read this poem, check out the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" in which he tries magically to stop time.

Time is the speaker's enemy because it causes young and beautiful people to turn old, "pale," thin as a ghost, and, eventually, dead as a doornail. Simply, time = death, death = bad, so time = bad.

Lines 27-28

Where but to think is to be full of sorrow

And leaden-eyed despairs,

The world is a place where any kind of thinking leads to depressing thoughts and worries. There are no thoughts that can ultimately bring joy or peace: thinking itself is the problem.

These sad and "despairing" thoughts make your eyelid like lead weights. You have trouble just staying awake and conscious during the day. The world totally wears people down and tires them out.

Lines 29-30

Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,

Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Notes

The speaker continues to explain why the world of human time is such a bad place. Neither Beauty nor Love can survive there for long. Beauty loses her glowing ("lustrous") eyes, probably when they become "leaden" from depressed thoughts.

And new Love cannot fawn ("pine") over Beauty's eyes once they have lost their luster. Love is fickle like that, and, as anyone who has ever been through junior high school knows, it often doesn't last "beyond to-morrow."

Stanza 4 Summary

Lines 31-32

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,

Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,

All this thinking about how depressing the world is makes the speaker think, "Get me outta here!" He needs to hatch an escape plan.

He wants fly away to join the nightingale in its refuge from the world. But he knows that the booze isn't going to take him. He can't rely on Bacchus, the Greek god of wine, or any of Bacchus's buddies ("pards"), which is what he wanted earlier in the poem.

Lines 33-34

But on the viewless wings of Poesy,

Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:

Instead of wine, he's going to fly on the wings of his own poetry. Poetry's wings are invisible, or "viewless."

He's hopeful that poetry will take him to the nightingale's world even though his brain is not so helpful in making the trip. His brain confuses him and slows him down.

Lines 35-36

Already with thee! tender is the night,

And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,

And, the, all of a sudden, he's with the nightingale. How did that happen? Count us slightly suspicious of how he can be "already with" the bird, even though he just complained about how his brain was such a big roadblock.

One possibility is that he joins the nightingale in his dreams, because the imagery in this section is associated with darkness and night.

He is in the kingdom of the night, which is soft and "tender," and the moon is visible in the sky. The imagery is more fanciful and imaginative here.

The phrase "tender is the night" was made famous by the American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald, who used it as the title of one of his novels.

Lines 37-40

Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;

But here there is no light,

Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown

Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

Notes

The moon is surrounded by her attendants ("fays"), the stars. Despite all these sources of light, there is no light in the nightingale's world beyond what filters down through the trees.

What he is really describing in this complicated-sounding line is the fact that the nightingale lives in the forest, where trees block the light. "Verdurous glooms," just means the darkness that is caused by plants getting in the way of the moon. Still, the nightingale's home sounds like a magical place, something out of a fairy tale.

Stanza 5 Summary

Lines 41-42

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,

Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,

The speaker remains in the nightingale's nighttime world. Without light, the speaker can't see the flowers on the forest floor or the plants that produce that pleasant smell ("soft incense") in the trees.

Lines 43-46

But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet

Wherewith the seasonable month endows

The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;

White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;

The speaker is still groping around in the dark, but he's having fun. Because he can't see, he has to guess what "sweet" flowers and plants he smells, which depends on what month it is. It's a delicious guessing game.

The darkness is "embalmed," where "balm" is a sweet-smelling substance like a perfume. He's guessing all kinds of different plants: "Grass!" "Fruit tree!" "Wait, wait, I know this one: white hawthorn! No, it's eglantine!" Or maybe he smells all of them at once, like a bouquet.

Lines 47-50

Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;

And mid-May's eldest child,

The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,

The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

The speaker names more plants that he smells in the darkness. He also begins listing things that he can hear. This section all relates to the experience of being alone in a dark – but not a frightening – forest.

He sees violets, a summer flower, and the musk rose, a flower that blooms in May. The dew of the musk rose is intoxicating, like the wine he spoke of earlier.

He hears the sound of flies on a summer evening. In short, he seems to experience both spring and summer at the same time, which tells us that we have left the world of strict reality. As Dorothy might say, we're not in Kansas anymore.

Stanza 6 Summary

Lines 51-52

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time

I have been half in love with easeful Death,

Notes

The stanzas in this poem actually connect seamlessly. At the end of stanza 5, the speaker moved from smells to sounds. Now he says that he is listening in the darkness.

The experience of being alone in the dark seems related to the experience of death, and he thinks maybe death wouldn't be so bad. "This is easy," he thinks. "I could get used to this."

Death would be another way to free himself of all his worldly cares. Maybe he's confusing death for sitting on a beach in Barbados….

Lines 53-54

Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,

To take into the air my quiet breath;

This is turning into a love story between the speaker and death. The speaker whispers sweet nothings to death. And by whisper we mean, "writes rhyming poetry about."

Keats was obsessed with the idea of death, and he often wrote about it. Line 54 is mysterious: we think it means either that he wants death to take the air from his lungs, or that the air takes his breath along with his verses.

Lines 55-56

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,

To cease upon the midnight with no pain,

He's really quite taken with this death idea. While in the world of the nightingale, he thinks it would be "rich to die." Many people are afraid that death will be empty, but richness is associated with an abundance of good things, which is almost the opposite of emptiness.

He'd like to go out quietly, in the middle of the night. He'd just stop existing: "cease." This part of the poem is kind of creepy, because Keats did die very young.

Lines 57-58

While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad

In such an ecstasy!

He wants to die at midnight, while listening to the nightingale singing. We were wondering what happened to the nightingale. He seems to forget about the nightingale at the beginning of the stanzas and then return to it at the end, as if he suddenly remembered: "Oh, right: this is supposed to be a poem about a bird!"

The nightingale is kind of like a poet, sending its voice into the air just as Keats sends his rhyme into the air. The bird's music expresses its "soul." Birds have souls? This one does. The bird is completely lost in the moment of pure joy and "ecstasy."

Lines 59-60

Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—

To thy high requiem become a sod.

He imagines what would happen after the moment of his death. Basically, the bird would keep singing as if nothing had happened. The speaker would still have "ears," of course: or at least. His corpse would. But the ears would be useless ("vain") because there is no brain to process the sounds. The bird would be then singing a "high requiem," a kind of church service with music sung for a dead person. Lots of classical musicians have composed amazing requiems, like Mozart, but we'd bet the nightingale probably doesn't know it is singing one.

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And neither would the speaker, of course. By that point, he'd just be an inanimate object, like a piece of grassy soil or "sod."

Stanza 7 Summary

Lines 61-62

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!

No hungry generations tread thee down;

He thinks that the nightingale must be immortal: it can't die. Being immortal, the nightingale is not followed by future generations, which are metaphorically "hungry" in that they take the place of their parents. This is a very pessimistic view of the cycle of life. Basically, the younger folks are hunting down their own parents to run them off the planet.

Lines 63-64

The voice I hear this passing night was heard

In ancient days by emperor and clown:

He doesn't necessarily mean that each nightingale is immortal. He means that the nightingale's voice is immortal, because all nightingales produce the same beautiful, haunting sound. His talk of generations leads him to think of human history.

Emperors and clowns in the old days listened to the same voice of the nightingale that he hears now. The reference to emperors makes us think of Ancient Rome. Keats was an Italian buff.

Lines 65-67

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path

Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,

She stood in tears amid the alien corn;

The speaker moves slightly further back through history, from Imperial Rome to the Old Testament of the Bible (also known as the Hebrew Bible). The Book of Ruth is one of the lesser-known books in the Hebrew Bible. The story goes that Ruth married a guy and moved to a new country. Then her husband died, and Ruth's mother-in-law told her to return home and get married again. But Ruth was like, "I'm totally loyal to you and can't leave you." She supports her mother-in-law by working in the fields of this (to her) completely strange and random place. Eventually she finds a new husband.

Keats imagines that Ruth heard the nightingale's song while she was working in the fields in this foreign or "alien" place, and it caused her to start weeping. We wish we had more info on why exactly he chose this story: it's a curious reference!

Lines 68-70

The same that oft-times hath

Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam

Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

He notes another time that the nightingale's song might have been heard. But now he has left regular human history all together in favor of fantasy. A "casement" is either a normal case or a window that opens on a hinge. The speaker thinks the nightingale's song has "charmed" a casement on a ship, and the casement opens. Somehow "magic" is involved, but we think Keats is just using words that conjure up the images of fantasy. The nightingale flies out the window and over the open ocean. There is an air of danger: this is no regular ocean. It is the ocean surrounding a fantasy world

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or "faery land." Keats might be thinking of the stories of knights, fairies, and monsters from Edmund Spenser's famous Renaissance poem, The Faerie Queene. After it flies out the window, the nightingale is alone and abandoned–"forlorn"–in this strange land.

Stanza 8 Summary

Lines 71-72

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell

To toil me back from thee to my sole self!

Why did he have to use the word "forlorn?" It reminds the speaker of how he has also been abandoned – by the nightingale itself. All of a sudden, he gets sucked back into the normal world after several pleasant stanzas of exploring the nightingale's realm. For him, the word "forlorn" is like, when you are having a really great dream and then all of a sudden you hear your alarm clock and remember that you have to wake up and go to class. It's a big disappointment. The speaker is pulled back into his own mind, his "sole self."

Lines 73-74

Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well

As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.

He admits that his attempts to use his imagination ("fancy") to "cheat" his way into the nightingale's world have not been as effective as he would have liked. He bids good-bye to the bird and then lashes out at his imagination for being a "deceiving elf," like the character Puck from Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. Although "fancy" is famed for being able to create new worlds, the speaker has not been successful at permanently escaping the everyday world.

Lines 75-78

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades

Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep

In the next valley-glades:

Now it becomes clear that the nightingale is flying away. The speaker bids goodbye twice more to the nightingale using the French word, "adieu," which means, "good-bye for a long time." The bird's sad or "plaintive" song grows harder to hear, as the bird flies from the nearby meadows, across a stream, up a hill, and into the next valley. Now he can't hear it at all.

Lines 79-80

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

Now that the bird is left, the speaker's not sure if he ever entered its world at all. He thinks that maybe the experience was just a "waking dream" and not really true. But has the speaker returned to the "real" world? Maybe the nightingale's world was reality, and the "real" world is just a dream. Everything is topsy-turvy, and he doesn't know what is true from what is fancy. He wonders if he is a awake or sleeping.

10.2.5 Themes

With "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats's speaker begins his fullest and deepest exploration of the themes of creative expression and the mortality of human life. In this ode, the transience of life and the

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tragedy of old age ("where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs, / Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies") is set against the eternal renewal of the nightingale's fluid music ("Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird!"). The speaker reprises the "drowsy numbness" he experienced in "Ode on Indolence," but where in "Indolence" that numbness was a sign of disconnection from experience, in "Nightingale" it is a sign of too full a connection: "being too happy in thine happiness," as the speaker tells the nightingale. Hearing the song of the nightingale, the speaker longs to flee the human world and join the bird. His first thought is to reach the bird's state through alcohol—in the second stanza, he longs for a "draught of vintage" to transport him out of himself. But after his meditation in the third stanza on the transience of life, he rejects the idea of being "charioted by Bacchus and his pards" (Bacchus was the Roman god of wine and was supposed to have been carried by a chariot pulled by leopards) and chooses instead to embrace, for the first time since he refused to follow the figures in "Indolence," "the viewless wings of Poesy."

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

6. The nightingale experiences a sort of death and even the God ..... experiences death, but his death reveals his own divine state.
   (a) Artemis (b) Apollo
   (c) Greek mythology (d) Hera
7. Of keats mix major odes of 1819, ... was probably written first and "To Autumn" written last.
   (a) Ode to Psyche (b) John keats
   (c) Cupid and Psyche (d) Ode on a Grecian Urn
8. There is also an emphasis on words beginning with ....., especially those that begin with "*b*", "*p*" or "*v*".
   (a) Palatal consonant (b) Consonant
   (c) Alveolar consonant (d) Velar consonant
9. Furthermore, keats began to reduce the amount of ..... based words and syntax that he relied on in his poetry, which in turn shortened the length of the words that dominate the poem.
   (a) Vulgar latin (b) Roman empire
   (c) Old latin (d) Latin
10. According to Keats's friend, ..., a nightingale had built its nest near his home in the spring of 1819.
   (a) John Keats (b) Charles Armitage Brown
   (c) London (d) Charles Brown

The rapture of poetic inspiration matches the endless creative rapture of the nightingale's music and lets the speaker, in stanzas five through seven, imagine himself with the bird in the darkened forest. The ecstatic music even encourages the speaker to embrace the idea of dying, of painlessly succumbing to death while enraptured by the nightingale's music and never experiencing any further pain or disappointment. But when his meditation causes him to utter the word "forlorn," he comes back to himself, recognizing his fancy for what it is—an imagined escape from the inescapable ("Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well / As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf"). As the nightingale flies away, the intensity of the speaker's experience has left him shaken, unable to remember whether he is awake or asleep.

In "Indolence," the speaker rejected all artistic effort. In "Psyche," he was willing to embrace the creative imagination, but only for its own internal pleasures. But in the nightingale's song, he finds a form of outward expression that translates the work of the imagination into the outside world,

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and this is the discovery that compels him to embrace Poesy's "viewless wings" at last. The "art" of the nightingale is endlessly changeable and renewable; it is music without record, existing only in a perpetual present. As befits his celebration of music, the speaker's language, sensually rich though it is, serves to suppress the sense of sight in favor of the other senses. He can imagine the light of the moon, "But here there is no light"; he knows he is surrounded by flowers, but he "cannot see what flowers" are at his feet. This suppression will find its match in "Ode on a Grecian Urn," which is in many ways a companion poem to "Ode to a Nightingale." In the later poem, the speaker will finally confront a created art-object not subject to any of the limitations of time; in "Nightingale," he has achieved creative expression and has placed his faith in it, but that expression—the nightingale's song—is spontaneous and without physical manifestation.

10.3 Ode to Autumn

10.3.1 Text

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;

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Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies

10.3.2 Summary

Keats's speaker opens his first stanza by addressing Autumn, describing its abundance and its intimacy with the sun, with whom Autumn ripens fruits and causes the late flowers to bloom. In the second stanza, the speaker describes the figure of Autumn as a female goddess, often seen sitting on the granary floor, her hair "soft-lifted" by the wind, and often seen sleeping in the fields or watching a cider-press squeezing the juice from apples. In the third stanza, the speaker tells Autumn not to wonder where the songs of spring have gone, but instead to listen to her own music. At twilight, the "small gnats" hum among the "the river sallows," or willow trees, lifted and dropped by the wind, and "full-grown lambs" bleat from the hills, crickets sing, robins whistle from the garden, and swallows, gathering for their coming migration, sing from the skies.

10.3.3 Form

Like the "Ode on Melancholy," "To Autumn" is written in a three-stanza structure with a variable rhyme scheme. Each stanza is eleven lines long (as opposed to ten in "Melancholy", and each is metered in a relatively precise iambic pentameter. In terms of both thematic organization and rhyme scheme, each stanza is divided roughly into two parts. In each stanza, the first part is made up of the first four lines of the stanza, and the second part is made up of the last seven lines. The first part of each stanza follows an ABAB rhyme scheme, the first line rhyming with the third, and the second line rhyming with the fourth. The second part of each stanza is longer and varies in rhyme scheme: The first stanza is arranged CDEDCCE, and the second and third stanzas are arranged CDECDDE. (Thematically, the first part of each stanza serves to define the subject of the stanza, and the second part offers room for musing, development, and speculation on that subject; however, this thematic division is only very general.)

10.3.4 Analysis

In 'To Autumn', a superficial reading would suggest that John Keats writes about a typical day of this season, describing all kind of colourful and detailed images. But before commenting on the meaning of the poem, I will briefly talk about its structure, its type and its rhyme.

The poem is an ode that contains three stanzas, and each of these has eleven lines. With respect to its rhyme, 'To Autumn' does not follow a perfect pattern. While the first stanza has an ABABCDEDCCE pattern, the second and the third ones have an ABABCDECDDE pattern. However, it is important to say that a poetic license appears in the third stanza. The word 'wind' (line 15) is pronounced [waind] to rhyme with 'find'.

With regard to the meaning of the poem, as I said above, the author makes an intense description of autumn at least at first sight. The first stanza begins showing this season as misty and fruitful, which, with the help of a 'maturing sun', ripens the fruit of the vines. Next, we can see clearly a hyperbole. Keats writes that a tree has so many apples that it bends (line 5), while the gourds swell and the hazel shells plumps. Finally, Keats suggests that the bees have a large amount of flowers. And these flowers did not bud in summer but now, in autumn. As a consequence, the bees are

incessantly working and their honeycombs are overflowing since summer.

In the second stanza, there is an evident personification. The poet starts asking a rhetoric question (line 12) to autumn which now is not only a woman but a gleaner. However, this woman is apparently resting in a granary or in the landscape:

'Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,

Drowsed with the fume of poppies…'

As she is not working with her hook, some flowers, that were going to be cut, remain untouchable (lines 17 and 18). Also we can see an image of her hair gently moving. The stanza ends with autumn patiently watching the 'last oozings' of cider.

The third stanza continues again with rhetoric questions. In the first one Keats asks the woman where the sounds of the spring are. And the second one is just a repetition of the same question. However, the poet tells autumn that she has her own sounds, although some of them are sad:

'Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn'

On the contrary, the 'full-grown lambs' bleat loudly, the crickets sing, a red-breast whistles, and swallows warble in the sky. Keats also describes a day that is dying, ending, and, as a consequence, is getting rose (lines 25 and 26). The last lines of this stanza consist of a combination of the autumn sounds, of the animal sounds (lines from 30 to 33) as I said before few lines above.

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

11. He devoted his free time to studying work such as Robert Burton's ..... to further his own ideas.
    (a) Aristotle (b) The Anatomy of Melancholy
    (c) Medicine (d) Major depressive disorder
12. His..... lacks hiatus and there is only a single instance medical inversion of an accent within the poem.
    (a) Syntax (b) Grammar
    (c) Morphology (d) Generative grammar
13. To Autumn is a poem written by English Romantic poet ..... .
    (a) George Gordon Byron (b) Romantic poetry
    (c) Percy Bysshe Shelley (d) John Keats
14. The ..... follows a pattern of starting with a Shakespearian ABAB pattern which is followed by CDEDCCE rhyme scheme.
    (a) English poetry (b) French poetry
    (c) Poetry (d) Rhyme
15. The poem also defends art's role in helping society in a manner similar to Keats's ..... and ode to Psyche.
    (a) Ode on a Grecian Urn (b) Ode to Nightingale
    (c) Ode on Indolence (d) John Keats

John Keats was simply describing the main characteristics of autumn, and the human and animal activities related to it, a deeper reading could suggest that Keats talks about the process of life. Autumn symbolises maturity in human and animal lives. Some instances of this are the 'full-grown lambs', the sorrow of the gnats, the wind that lives and dies, and the day that is dying and getting dark. As all we know, the next season is winter, a part of the year that represents aging and death,

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in other words, the end of life. However, in my opinion, death does not have a negative connotation because Keats enjoys and accepts 'autumn' or maturity as part of life, though winter is coming.

Task All of the seasons have found poets to sing their praises, or at least their significance. But what is special to Keat's speaker about Autumn?

10.3.5 Themes

In both its form and descriptive surface, "To Autumn" is one of the simplest of Keats's odes. There is nothing confusing or complex in Keats's paean to the season of autumn, with its fruitfulness, its flowers, and the song of its swallows gathering for migration. The extraordinary achievement of this poem lies in its ability to suggest, explore, and develop a rich abundance of themes without ever ruffling its calm, gentle, and lovely description of autumn. Where "Ode on Melancholy" presents itself as a strenuous heroic quest, "To Autumn" is concerned with the much quieter activity of daily observation and appreciation. In this quietude, the gathered themes of the preceding odes find their fullest and most beautiful expression.

"To Autumn" takes up where the other odes leave off. Like the others, it shows Keats's speaker paying homage to a particular goddess—in this case, the deified season of Autumn. The selection of this season implicitly takes up the other odes' themes of temporality, mortality, and change: Autumn in Keats's ode is a time of warmth and plenty, but it is perched on the brink of winter's desolation, as the bees enjoy "later flowers," the harvest is gathered from the fields, the lambs of spring are now "full grown," and, in the final line of the poem, the swallows gather for their winter migration. The understated sense of inevitable loss in that final line makes it one of the most moving moments in all of poetry; it can be read as a simple, uncomplaining summation of the entire human condition.

Despite the coming chill of winter, the late warmth of autumn provides Keats's speaker with ample beauty to celebrate: the cottage and its surroundings in the first stanza, the agrarian haunts of the goddess in the second, and the locales of natural creatures in the third. Keats's speaker is able to experience these beauties in a sincere and meaningful way because of the lessons he has learned in the previous odes: He is no longer indolent, no longer committed to the isolated imagination (as in "Psyche"), no longer attempting to escape the pain of the world through ecstatic rapture (as in "Nightingale"), no longer frustrated by the attempt to eternalize mortal beauty or subject eternal beauty to time (as in "Urn"), and no longer able to frame the connection of pleasure and the sorrow of loss only as an imaginary heroic quest (as in "Melancholy").

In "To Autumn," the speaker's experience of beauty refers back to earlier odes (the swallows recall the nightingale; the fruit recalls joy's grape; the goddess drowsing among the poppies recalls Psyche and Cupid lying in the grass), but it also recalls a wealth of earlier poems. Most importantly, the image of Autumn winnowing and harvesting (in a sequence of odes often explicitly about creativity) recalls an earlier Keats poem in which the activity of harvesting is an explicit metaphor for artistic creation. In his sonnet "When I have fears that I may cease to be," Keats makes this connection directly:

> When I have fears that I may cease to be
> Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
> Before high-piled books, in charactry,
> Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain...

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In this poem, the act of creation is pictured as a kind of self-harvesting; the pen harvests the fields of the brain, and books are filled with the resulting "grain." In "To Autumn," the metaphor is developed further; the sense of coming loss that permeates the poem confronts the sorrow underlying the season's creativity. When Autumn's harvest is over, the fields will be bare, the swaths with their "twined flowers" cut down, the cider-press dry, the skies empty. But the connection of this harvesting to the seasonal cycle softens the edge of the tragedy. In time, spring will come again, the fields will grow again, and the birdsong will return. As the speaker knew in "Melancholy," abundance and loss, joy and sorrow, song and silence are as intimately connected as the twined flowers in the fields. What makes "To Autumn" beautiful is that it brings an engagement with that connection out of the realm of mythology and fantasy and into the everyday world. The development the speaker so strongly resisted in "Indolence" is at last complete: He has learned that an acceptance of mortality is not destructive to an appreciation of beauty and has gleaned wisdom by accepting the passage of time.

10.4 Summary

- "Ode on a Grecian Urn" follows the same ode-stanza structure as the "Ode on Melancholy," though it varies more the rhyme scheme of the last three lines of each stanza.
- A man is whispering sweet nothings to a Grecian urn, an ancient Greek pot that is covered in illustrations.
- A priest is leading a cow to be sacrificed. People have come from a nearby town to watch.
- Like the "Ode on Melancholy," "To Autumn" is written in a three-stanza structure with a variable rhyme scheme.

10.5 Keywords

Ecstasy : Overwhelming or rapture.

Urn : Vase with a foot a rounded body, used esp. for the ashes of the dead.

Autumn : Season between summer and winter.

Piper : Person who plays a pipe.

Baffle : Frustrate, hinder.

10.6 Review Questions

1. What are emotions and desires does Keats speaker describe in connection with the nightingale?
2. Keats respectfully opposes Wordsworth's poetry of the egotistical subline. How does the present poem offer an alternative focus for poetry?
3. What paradox develops beginning with the second stanza and developing through the rest of the poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn"?
4. How does the stanzaic patterning of the poem "To Autumn" along with other formal features, reinforce the seasonal mood that keats explores?

Answers: Self Assessment

1.	(b)	2. (c)	3. (d)	4. (b)	5. (b)
6.	(b)	7. (a)	8. (b)	9. (d)	10. (b)
11.	(b)	12. (a)	13. (d)	14. (d)	15. (c).

Notes

10.7 Further Readings

Books

John Keats: a literary biography — Albert Helmer Hancock
William Wordsworth — William Wordsworth
Complete poetical works — William Wordsworth
Robert Browning — G.K.Chesterton.

Online links

http://englishhistory.net/keats/poetry.html
http://www.online-literature.com/keats/

Unit 11: Robert Browning: My Last Duchess and the Last Ride Together

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain briefly the text, summary and commentary of the poem "My Last Duchess"
- Explain briefly the text, summary and philosophy of the poem "The Last Ride Together"
- Discuss the detailed analysis of both poems.

Introduction

First published in the collection *Dramatic Lyrics* in 1842, "My Last Duchess" is an excellent example of Browning's use of dramatic monologue. Browning's psychological portrait of a powerful Renaissance aristocrat is presented to the reader as if he or she were simply "eavesdropping" on a slice of casual conversation. As the poem unfolds, the reader learns the speaker of the poem, Duke Ferrara, is talking to a representative of his fiancee's family. Standing in front of a portrait of the

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Duke's last wife, now dead, the Duke talks about the woman's failings and imperfections. The irony of the poem surfaces as the reader discovers that the young woman's "faults" were qualities like compassion, modesty, humility, delight in simple pleasures, and courtesy to those who served her.

Using abundant detail, Browning leads the reader to conclude that the Duke found fault with his former wife because she did not reserve her attentions for him, his rank, and his power. More importantly, the Duke's long list of complaints presents a thinly veiled threat about the behavior he will and will not tolerate in his new wife. The lines "I gave commands; / smiles stopped together" suggest that the Duke somehow, directly or indirectly, brought about the death of the last Duchess. In this dramatic monologue, Browning has not only depicted the inner workings of his speaker, but has in fact allowed the speaker to reveal his own failings and imperfections to the reader.

Robert Browning is difficult to a certain extent, demanding a degree of intellectual exertion on the part of the reader. His poetry is also characterized by a certain deliberate roughness reminiscent of the metaphysical poets. His poems are greatly concerned with human character and reflect an attraction towards the bizarre, the unusual and the eccentric. His poems are also dramatic and are concerned with Renaissance themes. The most important qualities pervading Browning's works are his robust optimism and spiritual courage. The narrator told his lover the fact of the matter that it is so and now at length he knows his fate, nothing to all his love avails and his life is meant to accept failure. This was written in his stars and all must need be that his whole heart rises up to bless her name in pride and thankfulness. He asked her to take back the hope she gave for he claimed only a memory of the same and besides this if she would not blame her leave for one more last ride with him. His mistress bent that brow of hers and those dark eyes where pride demurs; lingers; when pity would be softening through, fixed him with a breathing-while or two with life or death in the balance.

11.1 My Last Duchess

11.1.1 Text

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my Lady's wrist too much," or "Paint

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Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat"; such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart... how shall I say?... too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good; but thanked
Somehow... I know not how... as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I chuse
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your Master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, Sir! Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me.

Notes

11.1.2 Summary

This poem is loosely based on historical events involving Alfonso, the Duke of Ferrara, who lived in the 16th century. The Duke is the speaker of the poem, and tells us he is entertaining an emissary who has come to negotiate the Duke's marriage (he has recently been widowed) to the daughter of another powerful family. As he shows the visitor through his palace, he stops before a portrait of the late Duchess, apparently a young and lovely girl. The Duke begins reminiscing about the portrait sessions, then about the Duchess herself. His musings give way to a diatribe on her disgraceful behavior: he claims she flirted with everyone and did not appreciate his "gift of a nine-hundred-years- old name." As his monologue continues, the reader realizes with ever-more chilling certainty that the Duke in fact caused the Duchess's early demise: when her behavior escalated, "[he] gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together." Having made this disclosure, the Duke returns to the business at hand: arranging for another marriage, with another young girl. As the Duke and the emissary walk leave the painting behind, the Duke points out other notable artworks in his collection.

11.1.3 Form

"My Last Duchess" comprises rhyming pentameter lines. The lines do not employ end-stops; rather, they use enjambment—that is, sentences and other grammatical units do not necessarily conclude at the end of lines. Consequently, the rhymes do not create a sense of closure when they come, but rather remain a subtle driving force behind the Duke's compulsive revelations. The Duke is quite a performer: he mimics others' voices, creates hypothetical situations, and uses the force of his personality to make horrifying information seem merely colorful.

Did u know? Indeed, the poem provides a classic example of a dramatic monologue: the speaker is clearly distinct from the poet; an audience is suggested but never appears in the poem; and the revelation of the Duke's character is the poem's primary aim.

Task How does the poem compare to other works from the Victorian period?

11.1.4 Commentary

But Browning has more in mind than simply creating a colorful character and placing him in a picturesque historical scene. Rather, the specific historical setting of the poem harbors much significance: the Italian Renaissance held a particular fascination for Browning and his contemporaries, for it represented the flowering of the aesthetic and the human alongside, or in some cases in the place of, the religious and the moral. Thus the temporal setting allows Browning to again explore sex, violence, and aesthetics as all entangled, complicating and confusing each other: the lushness of the language belies the fact that the Duchess was punished for her natural sexuality. The Duke's ravings suggest that most of the supposed transgressions took place only in his mind. Like some of Browning's fellow Victorians, the Duke sees sin lurking in every corner. The reason the speaker here gives for killing the Duchess ostensibly differs from that given by the speaker of "Porphyria's Lover" for murder Porphyria; however, both women are nevertheless victims of a male desire to inscribe and fix female sexuality. The desperate need to do this mirrors the efforts of Victorian society to mold the behavior—sexual and otherwise—of individuals. For people confronted with an increasingly complex and anonymous modern world, this impulse comes naturally: to control would seem to be to conserve and stabilize. The Renaissance was a time when morally dissolute men like the Duke exercised absolute power, and as such it is a fascinating study for the Victorians: works like this imply that, surely, a time that produced magnificent art like the Duchess's portrait couldn't have been entirely evil in its allocation of societal control—even though it put men like the Duke in power.

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A poem like "My Last Duchess" calculatedly engages its readers on a psychological level. Because we hear only the Duke's musings, we must piece the story together ourselves. Browning forces his reader to become involved in the poem in order to understand it, and this adds to the fun of reading his work. It also forces the reader to question his or her own response to the subject portrayed and the method of its portrayal. We are forced to consider, Which aspect of the poem dominates: the horror of the Duchess's fate, or the beauty of the language and the powerful dramatic development? Thus by posing this question the poem firstly tests the Victorian reader's response to the modern world—git asks, Has everyday life made you numb yet?—gand secondly asks a question that must be asked of all art—git queries, Does art have a moral component, or is it merely an aesthetic exercise? In these latter considerations Browning prefigures writers like Charles Baudelaire and Oscar Wilde.

11.1.5 Detailed Analysis

Murder... mystery... intrigue... All describe Robert Browning's poem, "My Last Duchess." From the speaker's indirect allusions to the death of his wife the reader might easily think that the speaker committed a vengeful crime out of jealousy. His flowery speech confuses and disguises any possible motives, however, and the mystery is left unsolved. Based on the poem's style, structure, and historical references, it becomes evident that even if the speaker did not directly kill his wife, he certainly had something to hide.

The style and structure of this poem play a significant role in the effect of the poem. As is typical of Browning's poems, "My Last Duchess" is written as a dramatic monologue: one speaker relates the entire poem as if to another person present with him. This format suits this poem particularly well because the speaker, taken to be the Duke of Ferrara, comes across as being very controlling, especially in conversation. For example, he seems jealous that he was not able to monopolize his former duchess' smiles for himself. He also seems to direct the actions of the person he is addressing with comments such as "Will't please you rise?" (Line 47) and "Nay, we'll go / Together down, sir" (lines 53-54).

Task What is the role of women in the poem?

Browning uses many techniques, including a simple rhyme scheme, enjambment, and caesura to convey various characteristics and qualities about the speaker and the situation. Browning uses an AA BB rhyme scheme, which is very common to ballads and songs. It also enhances the irony of the speaker's later comment that he does not have "skill / In speech" (lines 35-36). The enjambed lines indicate the control that the speaker is exerting on the conversation and give the feeling that the speaker is rushing through parts of the poem.

Notes When the Duke is speaking of the death of his wife, for example, the lines running over suggest that he is nervous about the subject. The caesuras also suggest to the reader that he is hiding something or that he is pausing to think.

When discussing the poem's content, there are many things we know for certain and many others that are questionable. We know that the Duchess died suspiciously and that the Duke is in the process of looking for a new wife. He is speaking to a messenger about a painting of his now deceased wife. The Duke, of course, is casting himself in a favorable light and is presenting his best side. He wants to make it look as if his wife was cheating on him and was unfaithful to him. He is very controlling, and could not control her and her smiles. This smile was what the Duke likes the

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most about the painting of the Duchess—he feels that the painter accurately captured the smile and the vivacity of the Duchess. Now that the Duke owns this painting and has placed it behind a curtain, he can at last control who is graced with her smile.

When the Duchess was alive, the Duke could not control her smile and love for life and he considered her unfaithful. It is thought that he poisoned her because of these suspicions. Other aspects of the Duke that remain unclear include his true character. As mentioned, he is presenting his best side, but through his speech the reader sees how he is very jealous and controlling, which leads one to believe that he may have many dishonorable qualities. Another ambiguous quality about the Duke is his historical character. The poem clearly references the historical Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara (a city in northeast Italy), whose first wife died suspiciously within two years of their marriage. We know that Browning's Duke has a 900-year-old name of which he is very proud, and, based on his collection of paintings and sculptures, that he was a patron of the arts. Both facts correspond with information known about the historical Duke. However, the poem omits some important information. Browning does not refer to the Duchess in the painting as being a member of the royal de Medici family. Historical sources indicate that Alfonso's first wife was Lucretia de Medici, the daughter of two very important and powerful Italian monarchs. The poem is based on the fact that she died within two years of the Duke's ascension to the throne. Although sources indicate that she died suspiciously, it was never proven that the Duke had anything to do with her death.

11.2 The Last Ride Together

11.2.1 Text

I

I said—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
—Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

II

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me, a breathing-while or two,
With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenished me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:

Notes

I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end tonight?

III

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once—
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

IV

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

V

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought,—All labour, yet no less

Notes

Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

VI

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for who can reach,
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

VII

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

VIII

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?

Notes

What, man of music, you grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
"Put in music we know how fashions end!"
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

IX

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being—had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

X

And yet—she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

11.2.2 Summary

Robert Browning is difficult to a certain extent, demanding a degree of intellectual exertion on the part of the reader. His poetry is also characterized by a certain deliberate roughness reminiscent of the metaphysical poets. His poems are greatly concerned with human character and reflect an attraction towards the bizarre, the unusual and the eccentric. His poems are also dramatic and are concerned with Renaissance themes. The most important qualities pervading Browning's works are his robust optimism and spiritual courage. The narrator told his lover the fact of the matter that

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it is so and now at length he knows his fate, nothing to all his love avails and his life is meant to accept failure. This was written in his stars and all must need to be that his whole heart rises up to bless her name in pride and thankfulness. He asked her to take back the hope she gave for he claimed only a memory of the same and besides this if she would not blame her leave for one more last ride with him. His mistress bent that brow of hers and those dark eyes where pride demurs; lingers; when pity would be softening through, fixed him with a breathing-while or two with life or death in the balance.

The blood replenished; revitalized; him again and his last thoughts was at least not in vain. He and his mistress would sit side by side and together they would breathe and ride. So one more day would he be deified; become a god, *i.e.* achieved the supreme goal; who knows but the world may end tonight. If she would see some western cloud all billowy-bosomed; with gentle curves; over bowed by many benedictions; blessings; of the sun's, the moon's and evening stars at once, she would looked and loved best as her conscious grew, her passion drew closer to the cloud, sunset, moonrise and star-shine too. Right down near to her, till her flesh must fade for heaven was there. She leant and lingered for joy and fear and she lay for a moment on his breast. Ultimately they began the ride and his soul smoothed herself out-a long-cramped scroll; parchment kept rolled up for a long period- freshening and fluttering in the wind. Past hopes were already laid behind and there was no need to strive with a life's awry; gone wrong; had he said that or had he done this, so might he gain or so might he miss. She might have love or hated him. No one could tell as to where he had been now if the worst befell but here they are both of them riding together.

As they rode, it seemed that his spirit flew and saw other regions and new cities. As the world rushed on either side, he thought all labour bore up beneath their failure. Look at the end of work, contrast between the petty done and the vast undone. This present of theirs with a hopeful past, he hoped that she would love him as they ride. Their hands and brains went paired as much as their hearts alike conceived and dared. He saw her bosom heave and the many crowns that were hard to reach. There were ten lines in each of the statesman's life, the flag that was stuck on a heap of bones or what atones a soldier's doing? They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones; a memorial tablet at Westminster Abbey. This honour is usually given to distinguished people like the heroic soldier mentioned earlier in the poem; but the lover's riding was better than their leave.

His brains beat into rhythm, he spoke what he felt and held things that were beautifully the best. He paced them in rhyme side by side if he should be poor, sick or old before his time. Nearer one whit his own sublime; even a little bit nearer to his sublime ideal; than they who had never turned a rhyme as they sang and riding together for joy. She was like a great sculptor; not exactly identifiable since many medieval sculptors carved out statues of Venus-the ideal of feminine beauty; this a sole praise from a friend which greatly intends his opera's strains. They turn to yonder girl that fords the burn of her; acquiesce; agree; and he would repine; express dejection. In music they know how fashions end, he gave his youth but they rode in fine together. Fate proposed that bliss should sublimate his being there and one must lead some life beyond. To have bliss to die with, dim-descried; dimly observed as from afar; whose foot once planted on the goal. The glory-garland round his soul could he descry yet sunk back shuddering from the quest. Earth would be good but Heaven would be best for she was beyond this ride. She hardly spoke yet if Heaven would be fair and strong with their eyes upturned, whither life's flower is discerned as they headed to eternity, Heaven just proved that both of them rode together undisturbed.

11.2.3 Detailed Analysis

Robert Browning's "Last Ride Together" is a monologue of a rejected lover that expresses his undying love for his beloved. The title apparently gives out the notion that this is their last ride together. Nevertheless, what the speaker signifies is that he has lived all his life in this ride, with the all-sufficing splendor of love. The poem echoes the 'carpe diem' motif of seizing the present. He affirms that he is well-acquainted with his past. Even so, hitherto all that his life stood for, comes to naught when it

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comes to his unrequited love. His love is unselfish and does not avail of anything unreasonable, it is truly blessed with pride and happiness in having the Last ride with her which would endow him with the joy of a lifetime. For this, he would even handover his most priced possession- the hope of love that inspired him to live on. If gifted with the Ride, he guarantees that he will be content with just the memory of the hope that inspired him to go on.

Task Examine the last ride together as a dramatic monologue.

The Lady bent her brows to this entreaty; pity smoothening the pride had filled her dark eyes. The moment of her decision was a crucial point for the poet, as though he hung between life and death; and the colour left his face for a splitting second. However, the positive signal replenishes the blood at once. He is euphoric regarding the prospects of riding with her while the present lasted. And he states that he is deified or exalted for one more day, because one never knows when the world might end.

The poet subsequently refers to their physical proximity, implying that the word 'ride' has sexual connotations. The poet informs her that if the she witnesses the Western cloud with its bosom laden with blessings; if she encounters the sun's and moon's and evening stars all at once, it is just because heaven has descended upon them. The poet pleads with her to leave her consciousness aside, and let passion draw her "Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too, "That they rise above the distinctions of the flesh to a spiritual union. She comes closer to the speaker with mixed emotions of joy and fear.

The poet dwells on the significance of the present in the next stanza as he concentrates on the ride. He contemplates on why people attach so much significance to the past and future, than focusing on the present. His soul that was hitherto a long "scramped scroll " smoothens itself out. The metaphor connotes living life to the fullest in elation and ecstasy for the moment. The scroll freshens and flutters in the wind in intense euphoria. Why does one get carried way by past actions:

Had I said that, had I done this,

So might I gain, so might I miss.

Why do people leave room, for doubts, suspicions, failure, misgivings that haunt the present instead of protecting it, and distracting the same. One should breathe each moment as though there is no room for regret. For him at the moment there was no truth save:

And here we are riding, she and I.

The speaker anticipated no 'real' love from his ladylove. He had failed in word and deeds. He consoles himself that all men do strive for success, but who achieves it? His spirit was still on a high with regard to the present, as they encountered unknown avenues during the course of their ride. The speaker asserts that the "the world rushed by on either side.". That is, the world seemed to rush past because the poet was caught in the moment in slow motion. The world that was caught up in worldly pursuits continued with it, in spite of the failures they encountered. Yet, what compensates them for the petty present is the hopeful future that promises vast opportunities. Likewise, the poet temporarily goes against his own dictum, suddenly wishing that if she would ever love him back. He thus contradicts himself proving that hope is instinctive and universal. It cannot be traded for anything in the world, in spite of ourselves.

What hand and brain went ever paired?

What heart alike conceived and dared?

What act proved all its thought had been?

What will but felt the fleshly screen?

Notes

The poet asserts that the hand (practice) and brain (thought) never went perfectly paired. The heart never dared to give vent to the true emotions that it fostered. No act even could prove the intention behind the same. What hand and brain went ever paired?

Notes Browning deems himself to be in no way lesser to the statesman, soldier, soft, sculptor and musician. In fact, his riding is superior to all the above-said acts.

In this second stanza, he compares the Ride to the act of composing poetry. The difference is that the Poet expressed what the normal person felt. The poets idealize certain things and places them into rhyme, the image and rhyme co-existing side-by-side. However, the speaker quips whether the Poet's own life was as beautiful as he portrayed in poetry. Whether in reality the Poet was stricken with poverty or ailments or old age. It was perhaps his tragedies that contributed to an iota of his sublime.

> Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
>
> Nearer one whit your own sublime

Though the speaker prefers the Ride, as the ride entails only joy compared to the poets singing. Ironically the speaker is a Poet himself in reality.

The sculptor turns years to lock the beauty of Venus in his artistic creation, but it is of no practical use. The sculptor has devoted years of service to Art. The speaker personifies Art, and sculptor as the slave of Art. All this servility comes to nothing, because a person is more attracted towards domestic reality, his gaze immediately shifts from the statue of Venus to a dame that waddles(fords) through a spring of water(burn).The Sculptor acquiesces, he accepts fate reluctantly but without protest. On the other hand, shouldn't the speaker openly express his discontent? The significance of being a musician also pales in comparison. The musician whiles way his best years in music, while music too has its own fashions and one kind of music may not appeal to another generation. His only reward appears to be praise from a friend. The speaker too has sacrificed his youth, but he rides fine because it endows upon him the bliss of a lifetime.

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. What is the Duke arranging in "My Last Duchess"?
   (a) The Duchess's funeral (b) The painting of the Duchess's portrait
   (c) A new marriage for himself (d) The sale of his art collection
2. What is the rhyme scheme of "My Last Duchess"?
   (a) Enjambed blank verse (b) Enjambed rhyming couplets
   (c) End-stopped rhyming couplets (d) End-stopped blank verse
3. Who was the author of "My Last Duchess"?
   (a) Elizabeth Barrett Browning (b) Lord Tennyson
   (c) Arthur Hugh Clough (d) Robert Browning
4. Who is presumed speaker of "My Last Duchess"?
   (a) Robert Browning (b) Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara
   (c) The Duchess of Ferrara (d) Fra Pandolf

Notes

5. What is the object of the Duke's discussion at the beginning of the poem?
   (a) The Duchess, who is standing by the wall
   (b) A painting of the Duke
   (c) Neptune
   (d) A painting of the Duchess
6. How old does the Duke say his name is?
   (a) 900 (b) 600
   (c) 300 (d) 100
7. What is the current object of the Duke's desire (as he sees it)?
   (a) A painting (b) A Neptune sculpture
   (c) The duchess (d) The count's daughter
8. Who was the sculptor of Neptune in the poem?
   (a) Carlo crivelli (b) Giotto di Bandone
   (c) Claus of Innsbruck (d) Lorenzo Ghiberti
9. What does the Duke say that he will never do?
   (a) Love (b) Hate
   (c) Fear (d) Stoop
10. What does the Duke say was one of the faults of the Duchess?
   (a) She hated him (b) She smiled too much
   (c) She was never impressed (d) She was a snob

Only God knows what lies in store for us. Had the poet resigned himself to fate, and fate proposed bliss, he would not have found himself in a lofty position for the poet writes best when he is sad. Nevertheless one has to live a life beyond this 'destined' life, have his own share of ecstasy. One should descry these hitherto unexplored avenues of bliss. His feet seem to planted on the goal, and glory steady around one's neck in such an instance. Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?: asks the poet in a rhetorical question. He implies that if earth were good as people said it was, then how it was that heaven was the superlative. But now the experience itself has transcended the object and result of the experience as he declares:

"Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride."

The beloved has not spoken to him, throughout the ride. What if heaven is that life at its fairest and strongest? With the eyes focused towards the first fruition that always imparts unending joy. Being fixed in eternity, one need not be flexible. What if they ride on, old with experience, but ever-new in essence? Altered not in the kind, but in degree: not in quantity but in quality. In such an instance, a single instant is transformed into eternity. And lastly, what if, they could forever 'ride' without worrying about action, intention or inclination.

11.2.4 Philosophy of Robert Browning

Browning was primarily a thinker, and would not have understood Keat's prayer for "a world of sensation rather than of thought." He "chose poetry" because he felt his thought was valuable, requisite to be given to the world, and given more arrestingly in verse, for which he know he had a very unusual gift. A large portion of his poetry consists of his reflections, sometimes bare and bald, sometimes buried beneath masses of verbal debris, more often clothed in his own individual kind of rich and varied verse.

Notes

Browning's religion is inextricably bound up with his philosophy of life. His philosophy is no set professional synthesis, but the immediate product of a series of recurrent insights into life. His poems are his philosophy. He is one of those great poets who have given a concrete synthesis of life, a creative and constructive line of thinking and above all a deep and profound philosophy of life grounded in optimism and faith.

In estimating Browning's philosophy of life one is to bear in mind that he treated certain elements as axiomatic. He harbored no doubts about certain of his philosophical conceptions and took them for granted. He was not prepared to enter into any arguments about the veracity of certain of his philosophical thoughts and ideas.

Browning takes for granted the existence and supremacy of God as the creator and the sole governor of the universe, and was not, in the least, in a position to doubt His existence. He considered God as an all pervading Deity, an essence always partially, never wholly revealed in the creative energy of nature and the aspirations of man. All nature is viewed as a thought of God . "God is the perfect poet", he says "who in His person acts his own creations." So the whole universe is a crystallized thought of God to him:

"God dwells in all
From life's minute beginnings up at last
To man,
and
God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the cloud."

Browning did not conceive of God as a cruel and tyrannical being unmindful of the lot of the creative universe, or a sinister intelligence bent on punishing mankind. He conceived of God as a benignant and sympathetic power helping men in their endeavors if they reposed faith in Him and His mercy:

"God made all the creatures and gave them
Our love and our fear
We and they are His children
Our family here."

Browning's philosophy of life, evident in many of his poems, is based upon his faith in immortality. He never believed that death brings the end of the divine spark irradiating human life. God is the potter and the soul is the clay. Both of them endure forever. This faith of the poet is expressed in "**Rabbi Ben Ezra**":

"Fool! All that is at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;"
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure."

The earthly life is a period of trial, testing and preparation for the future life is central to Browning's optimistic philosophy of life. The earthly life is necessarily imperfect:

"On the earth the broken arcs: in the heaven a perfect round."

Though, imperfect Browning earnestly believed that the world with all its glories and triumphs, its joys and fears, is a fitting place for man's actions and activities. Browning was not an ascetic who shunned the world, nor across grained man to regard the universe as a vale of sorrow and tears,

Notes

"Where but to think is to be full of sorrow", "Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,/Or new love pine at them beyond tomorrow." He had a genuine interest in the world and human life, which he considered to be real and good, for he found many things that were good in it.

Optimism is a philosophy, a considered judgment on life. Often though not necessarily, associated with happiness, which is mainly a matter of temperament. Fra Lippo Lippi's philosophy, his optimistic judgment on life, is summed up in his belief that:

"This world's no blot for us,

Nor blank—it means intensely, and means good,

To find its meaning is my meat and drink."

Although Lippo is a dramatic character, Browning's own voice and attitude to life speak through him, eloquent in every touch of delighted description of nature, of human beauty, or of the man-made scene. Again in the same poem we have another statement, recognizing the goodness of the world—

"The world and life's too long to pass for a dream."

"Andrea del Sarto" is a poem which has to be viewed in a wider context than the special one of the artist's life and activity, for it expresses an important aspect of Browning's philosophy. In posing the questions "what is success?" "What is failure?" and exploring the reality rather than the appearance of each, the poet is envisaging the life of not only the creative artist but of men in general. In this poem Browning emphasizes the necessity of keeping high ideals in one's life. He should set his goal as high as possible even though it may be impossible to attain in this life:

"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed disgrace,

Or what's a Heaven for?"

says the unhappy Andrea del Sarto, who realizes he has failed because he has set his goal too low. Success, in the world's sense, may in the light of eternity be failure; failure, in the world's sense, may be lasting success. Man is judged by God by his aspirations, his noble ideals, and his efforts to achieve success in life. In God's view success is not the yardstick to judge a man's earthly life. A man who has failed in a noble struggle is likely to be placed on a higher pedestal in the kingdom of God as compared to the man who aspires to gain little and succeeds in achieving that little in his life. This faith that man's success would be judged not by achievements only but by his efforts and endeavors too, is voiced fervently in "**Rabbi Ben Ezra**":

"But all, the worlds' coarse thumb

And finger failed to plumb,

So passed in making up the main account,

All instincts immature,

All purposes unsure,

That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's account."

[**Rabbi Ben Ezra**: Robert Browning]

Browning believes that on earth we have the "broken arc" but in heaven there is "the perfect round". But despite earth's—and man's—imperfections, man's highest duty is to strive toward perfection of himself. In "**Rabbi Ben Ezra**" comes the counsel:

Notes

"As it was better, youth

Should strive, through acts uncouth,

Towards making."

[**Rabbi Ben Ezra**: Robert Browning]

Life is probation. Life follows life. Man's soul is immortal death need not terrify us. As Browning faithfully voices in "**Rabbi Ben Ezra**":

"So, better, age, exempt

From strife, should know, than tempt

Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death, nor be afraid!"

[**Rabbi Ben Ezra**: Robert Browning]

Imperfects and failures are man's glory, because they prophesy the future bliss. What man fails to achieve in this world would be attained by him in the next— that was Browning's hope and faith as he in "**A Grammarian's Funeral**" states:

"…What's time? Leave now for dogs and apes!

"Man has forever."

Such is the optimistic philosophy of Browning, based on his invincible faith, not founded on any arguments for optimism, nor on opinions, but on life which is the work of God. The pronouncements on life are preponderantly sober, but the sky is lighted by courage and hope and faith.

Browning rejected the idea of asceticism and believed that this life should be lived to the full, like "**Fra Lippo Lippi**" he believed in "the value and significance of flesh", and he causes Rabbi Ben Ezra to advise:

"Let us not always say,

"Spite of this flesh today

I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"

As the bird wings and sings,

Let us cry" All good things

Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

11.3 Summary

- This poem is loosely based on historical events involving Alfonso, the Duke of Ferrara, who lived in the 16th century.
- The Duke begins reminiscing about the portrait sessions, then about the Duchess herself.
- The style and structure of this poem play a significant role in the effect of the poem.
- A poem like "My Last Duchess" calculatedly engages its readers on a psychological level.
- The most important qualities pervading Browning's works are his robust optimism and spiritual courage.
- Robert Browning's "Last Ride Together" is a monologue of a rejected lover that expresses his undying love for his beloved.

Notes

11.4 Keywords

Transcendentalism : Transcendentalism is a group of ideas in literature and philosophy that developed in the 1830s and 1840s as a protest against the general state of culture and society.

Interconnectedness : Interconnectedness refers to state of being mutually joined or related.

Morality : Morality is the sense which differentiates among the intentions, decisions and actions, between those that are good and bad.

Imagery : Imagery, in a literary text, is the use of details and descriptors, such as adjectives and nouns, used to create a mental or sensational image in the mind of a reader.

Verse : A verse is formally a single line in a metrical composition, e.g. poetry. However, the word has come to represent any division or grouping of words in such a composition, which traditionally had been referred to as a stanza.

11.5 Review Questions

1. How does Robert Browning reveal character in "My Last Duchess"?
2. What are some symbols in "My Last Duchess"?
3. Show how Browning's philosophy of life and philosophy of love are fused together in the last ride together.
4. Browning's the last ride together rigisters his characteristic optimism. Do you agree?

Answers: Self Assessment

1. (c)	2. (b)	3. (d)
4. (b)	5. (b)	6. (a)
7. (d)	8. (c)	9. (d)
10. (b)		

11.6 Further Readings

Books

John Keats: a literary biography — Albert Helmer Hancock
William Wordsworth — William Wordsworth
Complete poetical works — William Wordsworth
Robert Browning — G.K.Chesterton

Online links

http://www.shmoop.com/my-last-duchess/summary.html

http://voices.yahoo.com/poetry-analysis-robert-brownings-last-ride-together-6890172.html

Notes

Unit 12: Tennyson, Arnold and Yeats

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the analysis of the Lord Tennyson's, The lady of shallot and Ulysses
- Critically appreciate the Mathew Arnold's "Dover beach"
- Discuss the Introduction of the W.B.Yeats and his poem, "A prayer for my daughter"
- Examine the theme of W.B.Yeats's, "Second Coming"
- Consider W.B.Yeats as an Irish poet.

Introduction

Alfred Tennyson, 1st Baron Tennyson, FRS (6 August 1809 – 6 October 1892) was Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom during much of Queen Victoria's reign and remains one of the most popular poets in the English language.

Notes

Tennyson excelled at penning short lyrics, such as "In the Valley of Cauteretz", "Break, Break, Break", "and The Charge of the Light Brigade "," Tears, Idle Tears "and" Crossing the Bar". Much of his verse was based on classical mythological themes, such as Ulysses, although In Memoriam A.H.H. was written to commemorate his best friend Arthur Hallam, a fellow poet and fellow student at Trinity College, Cambridge, who was engaged to Tennyson's sister, but died from a brain haemorrhage before they could marry. Tennyson also wrote some notable blank verse including Idylls of the King, "Ulysses," and "Tithonus." During his career, Tennyson attempted drama, but his plays enjoyed little success.

William Butler Yeats was born in County Dublin on June 13, 1865. Due to the demands of his father's career as an artist, he moved with his family to London at a young age, but he spent summers in County Sligo, in Western Ireland. When Yeats was fifteen his family moved back to Dublin, where he attended the Metropolitan School of Art.

12.1 Lord Tennyson: The Lady of Shallot, Ulysses

12.1.1 The Lady of Shallot: Text

Part I

On either side of the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And through the field the road runs by
To many-towered Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Through the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow veiled
Slide the heavy barges trailed
By slow horses; and unhailed
The shallop flitteth silken-sailed
Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?

Notes

Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to towered Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott."

Part II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving through a mirror clear
That hands before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the curly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,

Pass onward from Shalott.
Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,
Goes by to towered Camelot;
And sometimes through the mirror blue

Notes

The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often through the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
"I am half sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

Part III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling through the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneeled
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glittered free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazoned baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burned like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often through the purple night,

Notes

Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flowed
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lira," by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces through the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror cracked from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

Part IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over towered Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;

Notes

The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Through the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darkened wholly,
Turned to towered Camelot.
For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott."

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they crossed themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott."

Notes

"The Lady of Shallot" tells the story of a woman who lives in a tower in Shallot, which is an island on a river that runs, along with the road beside it, to Camelot, the setting of the legends about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Every day, the woman weaves a tapestry picture of the landscape that is visible from her window, including Camelot. There is, however, a curse on her; the woman does not know the cause of the curse, but she knows that she cannot look directly out of the window, so she views the subjects of her artwork through a mirror that is beside her. The woman is happy to weave, but is tired of looking at life only as a reflection. One day, Sir Lancelot rides by, looking bold and handsome in his shining armor, and singing. The woman goes to the window to look directly out of it, and the moment she does, she knows that the curse is upon her. So she leaves the tower, finds a boat at the side of the river, writes "The Lady of Shallot" on the side of the boat, and floats off down the river toward Camelot. As she drifts along, singing and observing all of the sights that were forbidden to her before, she dies. The boat floats past Camelot, and all of the knights make the sign of the cross upon seeing a corpse go by, but Lancelot, seeing her for the first time, notes, "She has a lovely face."

This poem was first published in 1832, when Tennyson was 23 years old, in a volume called Poems. Up to that point, Tennyson had received great critical acclaim and had won national awards, but the critics savagely attacked the 1832 book, mostly because of poems such as "The Lady of Shallot" that dealt with fantasy situations instead of realistic ones. The next year, 1833, Tennyson's best friend died, which affected the poet as greatly as would anything in his life. For a long time, during a period that later came to be known as "the ten years' silence," nothing of Tennyson's was published. In 1842, a new volume, also called Poems, was published, to great critical acclaim. The new book had a slightly revised version of "The Lady of Shallot," and this version is the one that is studied today.

Story

The Lady of Shallot is a magical being who lives alone on an island upstream from King Arthur's Camelot. Her business is to look at the world outside her castle window in a mirror, and to weave what she sees into a tapestry. She is forbidden by the magic to look at the outside world directly. The farmers who live near her island hear her singing and know who she is, but never see her.

Task Write short note on poem the Lady Shallot.

The Lady sees ordinary people, loving couples and knights in pairs reflected in her mirror. One day, she sees the reflection of Sir Lancelot riding alone. Although she knows that it is forbidden, she looks out the window at him. The mirror shatters, the tapestry flies off on the wind, and the Lady feels the power of her curse.

An autumn storm suddenly arises. The lady leaves her castle, finds a boat, writes her name on it, gets into the boat, sets it adrift, and sings her death song as she drifts down the river to Camelot. The locals find the boat and the body, realize who she is, and are saddened. Lancelot prays that God will have mercy on her soul.

This is one of Tennyson's most popular poems. The Pre-Raphaelites liked to illustrate it. Waterhouse made three separate paintings of "The Lady of Shalott". Agatha Christie wrote a Miss Marple mystery entitled "The Mirror Crack'd From Side to Side", which was made into a movie starring Angela Lansbury. Tirra Lirra by the River, by Australian novelist Jessica Anderson, is the story of a modern woman's decision to break out of confinement.

Did u know? The poem was particularly popular amongst artists of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, who shared Tennyson's interest in Arthuriana; several of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood made paintings based on episodes from the poem.

Notes

The 1857 Moxon edition of Tennyson's works was illustrated by William Holman Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Hunt depicted the moment when the Lady turns to see Lancelot. Rossetti depicted Lancelot's contemplation of her 'lovely face'. Neither illustration pleased Tennyson, who took Hunt to task for depicting the Lady caught in the threads of her tapestry, something which is not described in the poem. Hunt explained that he wanted to sum up the whole poem in a single image, and that the entrapment by the threads suggested her "weird fate". The scene fascinated Hunt, who returned to the composition at points throughout his life, finally painting a large scale version shortly before his death. He required assistants, as he was too frail to complete it himself. This deeply conceived evocation of the Lady, ensnared within the perfect rounds of her woven reality, is an apt illustration of the mythology of the weaving arts. This work is now in the collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Connecticut.

John William Waterhouse painted three episodes from the poem. In 1888, he painted the Lady setting out for Camelot in her boat; this work is now in the Tate Gallery. In 1894, Waterhouse painted the Lady at the climactic moment when she turns to look at Lancelot in the window; this work is now in the City Art Gallery in Leeds. In 1915, Waterhouse painted "I Am Half-Sick of Shadows," Said the Lady of Shalott, as she sits wistfully before her loom; this work is now in the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Because of the similarity in the stories, paintings of Elaine of Astolat tend to be very similar to paintings of the Lady of Shalott. The presence of a servant rowing the boat is one aspect that distinguishes them.

Analysis

Part I

The poem begins with a description of a river and a road that pass through long fields of barley and rye before reaching the town of Camelot. The people of the town travel along the road and look toward an island called Shalott, which lies further down the river. The island of Shalott contains several plants and flowers, including lilies, aspens, and willows. On the island, a woman known as the Lady of Shalott is imprisoned within a building made of "four gray walls and four gray towers."

Both "heavy barges" and light open boats sail along the edge of the river to Camelot. But has anyone seen or heard of the lady who lives on the island in the river? Only the reapers who harvest the barley hear the echo of her singing. At night, the tired reaper listens to her singing and whispers that he hears her: "Tis the fairy Lady of Shalott."

Part II

The Lady of Shalott weaves a magic, colorful web. She has heard a voice whisper that a curse will befall her if she looks down to Camelot, and she does not know what this curse would be. Thus, she concentrates solely on her weaving, never lifting her eyes.

However, as she weaves, a mirror hangs before her. In the mirror, she sees "shadows of the world," including the highway road, which also passes through the fields, the eddies in the river, and the peasants of the town. Occasionally, she also sees a group of damsels, an abbot (church official), a young shepherd, or a page dressed in crimson. She sometimes sights a pair of knights riding by, though she has no loyal knight of her own to court her. Nonetheless, she enjoys her solitary weaving, though she expresses frustration with the world of shadows when she glimpses a funeral procession or a pair of newlyweds in the mirror.

Part III

A knight in brass armor ("brazen greaves") come riding through the fields of barley beside Shalott; the sun shines on his armor and makes it sparkle. As he rides, the gems on his horses bridle glitter like a constellation of stars, and the bells on the bridle ring. The knight hangs a bugle from his sash, and his armor makes ringing noises as he gallops alongside the remote island of Shalott.

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In the "blue, unclouded weather," the jewels on the knight's saddle shine, making him look like a meteor in the purple sky. His forehead glows in the sunlight, and his black curly hair flows out from under his helmet. As he passes by the river, his image flashes into the Lady of Shallot's mirror and he sings out "tirra lirra." Upon seeing and hearing this knight, the Lady stops weaving her web and abandons her loom. The web flies out from the loom, and the mirror cracks, and the Lady announces the arrival of her doom: "The curse is come upon me."

Part IV

As the sky breaks out in rain and storm, the Lady of Shalott descends from her tower and finds a boat. She writes the words "The Lady of Shalott" around the boat's bow and looks downstream to Camelot like a prophet foreseeing his own misfortunes. In the evening, she lies down in the boat, and the stream carries her to Camelot.

The Lady of Shalott wears a snowy white robe and sings her last song as she sails down to Camelot. She sings until her blood freezes, her eyes darken, and she dies. When her boat sails silently into Camelot, all the knights, lords, and ladies of Camelot emerge from their halls to behold the sight. They read her name on the bow and "cross...themselves for fear." Only the great knight Lancelot is bold enough to push aside the crowd, look closely at the dead maiden, and remark "She has a lovely face; God in his mercy lend her grace."

Form

The poem is divided into four numbered parts with discrete, isometric (equally-long) stanzas. The first two parts contain four stanzas each, while the last two parts contain five. Each of the four parts ends at the moment when description yields to directly quoted speech: this speech first takes the form of the reaper's whispering identification, then of the Lady's half-sick lament, then of the Lady's pronouncement of her doom, and finally, of Lancelot's blessing. Each stanza contains nine lines with the rhyme scheme AAAABCCCB. The "B" always stands for "Camelot" in the fifth line and for "Shalott" in the ninth. The "A" and "C" lines are always in tetrameter, while the "B" lines are in trimeter. In addition, the syntax is line-bound: most phrases do not extend past the length of a single line.

Commentary

Originally written in 1832, this poem was later revised, and published in its final form in 1842. Tennyson claimed that he had based it on an Old Italian romance, though the poem also bears much similarity to the story of the Maid of Astolat in Malory's Morte d'Arthur. As in Malory's account, Tennyson's lyric includes references to the Arthurian legend; moreover, "Shalott" seems quite close to Malory's "Astolat."

Much of the poem's charm stems from its sense of mystery and elusiveness; of course, these aspects also complicate the task of analysis. That said, most scholars understand "The Lady of Shalott" to be about the conflict between art and life. The Lady, who weaves her magic web and sings her song in a remote tower, can be seen to represent the contemplative artist isolated from the bustle and activity of daily life. The moment she sets her art aside to gaze down on the real world, a curse befalls her and she meets her tragic death. The poem thus captures the conflict between an artist's desire for social involvement and his/her doubts about whether such a commitment is viable for someone dedicated to art. The poem may also express a more personal dilemma for Tennyson as a specific artist: while he felt an obligation to seek subject matter outside the world of his own mind and his own immediate experiences—to comment on politics, history, or a more general humanity—he also feared that this expansion into broader territories might destroy his poetry's magic.

Part I and Part IV of this poem deal with the Lady of Shalott as she appears to the outside world, whereas Part II and Part III describe the world from the Lady's perspective. In Part I, Tennyson portray the Lady as secluded from the rest of the world by both water and the height of her tower. We are not told how she spends her time or what she thinks about; thus we, too, like everyone in the poem, are denied access to the interiority of her world. Interestingly, the only people who know

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that she exists are those whose occupations are most diametrically opposite her own: the reapers who toil in physical labor rather than by sitting and crafting works of beauty.

Part II describes the Lady's experience of imprisonment from her own perspective. We learn that her alienation results from a mysterious curse: she is not allowed to look out on Camelot, so all her knowledge of the world must come from the reflections and shadows in her mirror. (It was common for weavers to use mirrors to see the progress of their tapestries from the side that would eventually be displayed to the viewer.) Tennyson notes that often she sees a funeral or a wedding, a disjunction that suggests the interchangeability, and hence the conflation, of love and death for the Lady: indeed, when she later falls in love with Lancelot, she will simultaneously bring upon her own death.

Whereas Part II makes reference to all the different types of people that the Lady sees through her mirror, including the knights who "come riding two and two" (line 61), Part III focuses on one particular knight who captures the Lady's attention: Sir Lancelot. This dazzling knight is the hero of the King Arthur stories, famous for his illicit affair with the beautiful Queen Guinevere. He is described in an array of colors: he is a "red-cross knight"; his shield "sparkled on the yellow field"; he wears a "silver bugle"; he passes through "blue unclouded weather" and the "purple night," and he has "coal-black curls." He is also adorned in a "gemmy bridle" and other bejeweled garments, which sparkle in the light. Yet in spite of the rich visual details that Tennyson provides, it is the sound and not the sight of Lancelot that causes the Lady of Shalott to transgress her set boundaries: only when she hears him sing "Tirra lirra" does she leave her web and seal her doom. The intensification of the Lady's experiences in this part of the poem is marked by the shift from the static, descriptive present tense of Parts I and II to the dynamic, active past of Parts III and IV.

In Part IV, all the lush color of the previous section gives way to "pale yellow" and "darkened" eyes, and the brilliance of the sunlight is replaced by a "low sky raining." The moment the Lady sets her art aside to look upon Lancelot, she is seized with death. The end of her artistic isolation thus leads to the end of creativity: "Out flew her web and floated wide" (line 114). She also loses her mirror, which had been her only access to the outside world: "The mirror cracked from side to side" (line 115). Her turn to the outside world thus leaves her bereft both of her art object and of the instrument of her craft—and of her very life. Yet perhaps the greatest curse of all is that although she surrenders herself to the sight of Lancelot, she dies completely unappreciated by him. The poem ends with the tragic triviality of Lancelot's response to her tremendous passion: all he has to say about her is that "she has a lovely face" (line 169). Having abandoned her artistry, the Lady of Shalott becomes herself an art object; no longer can she offer her creativity, but merely a "dead-pale" beauty (line 157).

12.1.2 Ulysses: Text

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men

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And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.

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It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Summary

Ulysses (Odysseus) declares that there is little point in his staying home "by this still hearth" with his old wife, doling out rewards and punishments for the unnamed masses who live in his kingdom.

Still speaking to himself he proclaims that he "cannot rest from travel" but feels compelled to live to the fullest and swallow every last drop of life. He has enjoyed all his experiences as a sailor who travels the seas, and he considers himself a symbol for everyone who wanders and roams the earth. His travels have exposed him to many different types of people and ways of living. They have also exposed him to the "delight of battle" while fighting the Trojan War with his men. Ulysses declares that his travels and encounters have shaped who he is: "I am a part of all that I have met," he asserts. And it is only when he is traveling that the "margin" of the globe that he has not yet traversed shrinks and fade, and cease to goad him.

Ulysses declares that it is boring to stay in one place, and that to remain stationary is to rust rather than to shine; to stay in one place is to pretend that all there is to life is the simple act of breathing, whereas he knows that in fact life contains much novelty, and he longs to encounter this. His spirit yearns constantly for new experiences that will broaden his horizons; he wishes "to follow knowledge like a sinking star" and forever grow in wisdom and in learning.

Task Write about the prosody of poem Ulysses.

Ulysses now speaks to an unidentified audience concerning his son Telemachus, who will act as his successor while the great hero resumes his travels: he says, "This is my son, mine own Telemachus, to whom I leave the scepter and the isle." He speaks highly but also patronizingly of his son's capabilities as a ruler, praising his prudence, dedication, and devotion to the gods.

Notes Telemachus will do his work of governing the island while Ulysses will do his work of traveling the seas: "He works his work, I mine."

In the final stanza, Ulysses addresses the mariners with whom he has worked, traveled, and weathered life's storms over many years. He declares that although he and they are old, they still have the potential to do something noble and honorable before "the long day wanes." He encourages them to make use of their old age because "'tis not too late to seek a newer world." He declares that his goal is to sail onward "beyond the sunset" until his death. Perhaps, he suggests, they may even reach the "Happy Isles," or the paradise of perpetual summer described in Greek mythology where great heroes like the warrior Achilles were believed to have been taken after their deaths. Although Ulysses and his mariners are not as strong as they were in youth, they are "strong in will" and are sustained by their resolve to push onward relentlessly: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

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Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Libba Bray's book A Great and Terrible Beauty has a section of the poem as an introduction, as does Meg Cabot's ..... .
   (a) Merlin (b) King Arthur
   (c) Avalon High (d) Guinevere
2. In the novel the Prime of Miss Jean Brodie by ....., the title character recites the poem to her class (this is also done in the stage and film adaptations).
   (a) Zimbabwe (b) A.S. Byatt
   (c) Muriel Spark (d) Graham Greene
3. ..... painted three episodes from the poem.
   (a) Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (b) Royal Academy
   (c) John Everett Millais (d) John William Waterhouse
4. Who haunts Stephen throughout Ulysses?
   (a) His father (b) His mother
   (c) Shakespeare (d) Ulysses
5. What does Stephen perceive Buck to be?
   (a) Lover (b) Muse
   (c) Savior (d) Usurper

Form

This poem is written as a dramatic monologue: the entire poem is spoken by a single character, whose identity is revealed by his words. The lines are in blank verse, or unrhymed iambic pentameter, which serves to impart a fluid and natural quality to Ulysses' speech. Many of the lines are enjambed, which means that a thought does not end with the line-break; the sentences often end in the middle, rather than the end, of the lines. The use of enjambment is appropriate in a poem about pushing forward "beyond the utmost bound of human thought." Finally, the poem is divided into four paragraph-like sections, each of which comprises a distinct thematic unit of the poem.

Commentary

In this poem, written in 1833 and revised for publication in 1842, Tennyson reworks the figure of Ulysses by drawing on the ancient hero of Homer's Odyssey ("Ulysses" is the Roman form of the Greek "Odysseus") and the medieval hero of Dante's Inferno. Homer's Ulysses, as described in Scroll XI of the Odyssey, learns from a prophecy that he will take a final sea voyage after killing the suitors of his wife Penelope. The details of this sea voyage are described by Dante in Canto XXVI of the Inferno: Ulysses finds himself restless in Ithaca and driven by "the longing I had to gain experience of the world." Dante's Ulysses is a tragic figure who dies while sailing too far in an insatiable thirst for knowledge. Tennyson combines these two accounts by having Ulysses make his speech shortly after returning to Ithaca and resuming his administrative responsibilities, and shortly before embarking on his final voyage.

However, this poem also concerns the poet's own personal journey, for it was composed in the first few weeks after Tennyson learned of the death of his dear college friend Arthur Henry Hallam in 1833. Like In Memoriam, then, this poem is also an elegy for a deeply cherished friend. Ulysses, who symbolizes the grieving poet, proclaims his resolution to push onward in spite of the awareness that "death closes all" (line 51). As Tennyson himself stated, the poem expresses his own "need of going forward and braving the struggle of life" after the loss of his beloved Hallam.

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The poem's final line, "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield," came to serve as a motto for the poet's Victorian contemporaries: the poem's hero longs to flee the tedium of daily life "among these barren crags" (line 2) and to enter a mythical dimension "beyond the sunset, and the baths of all the western stars" (lines 60–61); as such, he was a model of individual self-assertion and the Romantic rebellion against bourgeois conformity. Thus for Tennyson's immediate audience, the figure of Ulysses held not only mythological meaning, but stood as an important contemporary cultural icon as well.

"Ulysses," like many of Tennyson's other poems, deals with the desire to reach beyond the limits of one's field of vision and the mundane details of everyday life. Ulysses is the antithesis of the mariners in "The Lotos-Eaters," who proclaim "we will no longer roam" and desire only to relax amidst the Lotos fields. In contrast, Ulysses "cannot rest from travel" and longs to roam the globe (line 6). Like the Lady of Shallot, who longs for the worldly experiences she has been denied, Ulysses hungers to explore the untraveled world.

As in all dramatic monologues, here the character of the speaker emerges almost unintentionally from his own words. Ulysses' incompetence as a ruler is evidenced by his preference for potential quests rather than his present responsibilities. He devotes a full 26 lines to his own egotistical proclamation of his zeal for the wandering life, and another 26 lines to the exhortation of his mariners to roam the seas with him. However, he offers only 11 lines of lukewarm praise to his son concerning the governance of the kingdom in his absence, and a mere two words about his "aged wife" Penelope.

Notes The speaker's own words betray his abdication of responsibility and his specificity of purpose.

Analysis

"Ulysses" is a poem in blank verse by the Victorian poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892), written in 1833 and published in 1842 in Tennyson's well-received second volume of poetry. An oft-quoted poem, it is popularly used to illustrate the dramatic monologue form. Ulysses describes, to an unspecified audience, his discontent and restlessness upon returning to his kingdom, Ithaca, after his far-ranging travels. Facing old age, Ulysses yearns to explore again, despite his reunion with his wife Penelope and son Telemachus.

The character of Ulysses (in Greek, Odysseus) has been explored widely in literature. The adventures of Odysseus were first recorded in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey (c. 800–700 BC), and Tennyson draws on Homer's narrative in the poem. Most critics, however, find that Tennyson's Ulysses recalls Dante's Ulisse in his Inferno (c. 1320). In Dante's re-telling, Ulisse is condemned to hell among the false counsellors, both for his pursuit of knowledge beyond human bounds and for his adventures in disregard of his family.

For much of this poem's history, readers viewed Ulysses as resolute and heroic, admiring him for his determination "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield". The view that Tennyson intended a heroic character is supported by his statements about the poem and by the events in his life—the death of his closest friend—that prompted him to write it. In the twentieth century, some new interpretations of "Ulysses" highlighted potential ironies in the poem. They argued, for example, that Ulysses wishes to selfishly abandon his kingdom and family, and they questioned more positive assessments of Ulysses' character by demonstrating how he resembles flawed protagonists in earlier literature.

As the poem begins, Ulysses has returned to his kingdom, Ithaca, having had a long, eventful journey home after fighting in the Trojan War. Confronted again by domestic life, Ulysses expresses his lack of contentment, including his indifference toward the "savage race" (line 4) that he governs. Ulysses contrasts his restlessness and boredom with his heroic past. He contemplates his age and eventual

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death—"Life piled on life / were all too little, and of one to me / little remains" (24–26)—and longs for further experience and knowledge. His son Telemachus will inherit the throne that Ulysses finds burdensome. While Ulysses thinks Telemachus will be an adequate king, he seems to have little empathy for his son—"He works his work, I mine" (43)—and the necessary methods of governing—"by slow prudence" (36) and "through soft degrees" (37). In the final section, Ulysses turns his attention to his mariners and calls on them to join him on another quest, making no guarantees as to their fate but attempting to conjure their heroic past:

> … Come, my friends,
> Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
> Push off, and sitting well in order smite
> The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
> To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
> Of all the western stars, until I die.
> It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
> It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
> And see the great Achilles, whom we knew. (56–64)

Prosody

The speaker's language is unadorned and forceful, and it expresses Ulysses' conflicting moods as he searches for continuity between his past and future. There is often a marked contrast between the sentiment of Ulysses' words and the sounds that express them. For example, the poem's insistent iambic pentameter is often interrupted by spondees (metrical feet consisting of two long syllables), which slow down the movement of the poem; the labouring language casts into doubt the reliability of Ulysses' sentiments. Noteworthy are lines 19–21:

> Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
> Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
> For ever and for ever when I move. (19–21)

Observing their burdensome prosodic effect, the poet Matthew Arnold remarked, "these three lines by themselves take up nearly as much time as a whole book of the Iliad." Many of the poem's clauses carry over into the following line; this enjambment emphasizes Ulysses' restlessness and dissatisfaction.

Form

The poem's seventy lines of blank verse are presented as a dramatic monologue. Scholars disagree on how Ulysses' speech functions in this format; it is not necessarily clear to whom Ulysses is speaking, if anyone, and from what location. Some see the verse turning from a soliloquy to a public address, as Ulysses seems to speak to himself in the first movement, then to turn to an audience as he introduces his son, and then to relocate to the seashore where he addresses his mariners. In this interpretation, the comparatively direct and honest language of the first movement is set against the more politically minded tone of the last two movements. For example, the second paragraph (33–43) about Telemachus, in which Ulysses muses again about domestic life, is a "revised version [of lines 1–5] for public consumption": a "savage race" is revised to a "rugged people".

The ironic interpretations of "Ulysses" may be the result of the modern tendency to consider the narrator of a dramatic monologue as necessarily "unreliable". According to critic Dwight Culler, the poem has been a victim of revisionist readings in which the reader expects to reconstruct the truth from a misleading narrator's accidental revelations. (Compare the more obvious use of this

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approach in Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess".) Culler himself views "Ulysses" as a dialectic in which the speaker weighs the virtues of a contemplative and an active approach to life; Ulysses moves through four emotional stages that are self-revelatory, not ironic: beginning with his rejection of the barren life to which he has returned in Ithaca, he then fondly recalls his heroic past, recognizes the validity of Telemachus' method of governing, and with these thoughts plans another journey.

12.2 Mathew Arnold: Dover Beach

This is a poem about a sea and a beach that is truly beautiful, but holds much deeper meaning than what meets the eye. The poem is written in free verse with no particular meter or rhyme scheme, although some of the words do rhyme. Arnold is the speaker speaking to someone he loves. As the poem a progress, the reader sees why Arnold poses the question stated above, and why life seems to be the way it is. During the first part of the poem Arnold states, "The Sea is calm tonight" and in line 7, "Only, from the long line of spray". In this way, Arnold is setting the mood or scene so the reader can understand the point he is trying to portray. In lines 1-6 he is talking about a very peaceful night on the ever so calm sea, with the moonlight shining so intensely on the land. Then he states how the moonlight "gleams and is gone" because the "cliffs of England" are standing at their highest peaks, which are blocking the light of the moon. Next, the waves come roaring into the picture, as they "draw back and fling the pebbles" onto the shore and back out to sea again. Arnold also mentions that the shore brings "the eternal note of sadness in", may be representing the cycles of life and repetition. Arnold then starts describing the history of Sophocles's idea of the "Aegean's turbid ebb and flow".

12.2.1 Text of Dover Beach

The sea is calm to-night,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; — on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.
Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,

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Hearing it by this distant northern sea.
The sea of faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night. (Matthew Arnold, 1867)

The opening stanza of Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" is a soothing description of what is believed to be Matthew Arnold looking out the window of his honeymoon cottage over a moonlit pebble beach of the Dover area of Southeastern England. All, save for the last line, is poetic romanticism at its finest; describing the "moon-blanch'd land" (8) as it's rhythmically washed by the sea, and the sound of the rasping pebbles echoing across the shoreline. The opening stanza of "Dover Beach" is meant to lull the reader into a peaceful composure, imagining the scene with the entire divine splendor that Arnold was writing with. The final line, however, Matthew Arnold ominously calls this scenery the medium that brings "the eternal note of sadness in" (14); the emotional music, that carries with it spiritual manna, bares the stinging bitter-sweet realization that none of it is actually real.

Sophocles (495 – 406), the Greek tragedy playwright, is described by Matthew Arnold as hearing the same sound in the Mediterranean when inspired to write his tragedies such as Antigone, King Oedipus, and Electra. Arnold describes it as having "brought into his mind the turbid ebb and flow of human misery" (16). This comparison to Sophocles' Theban plays, in their pitiless misfortunes, foreshadows the mood of the following stanzas. The touching enchantment of first devout stanza of "Dover Beach" is now enveloped by the ugly and secular truth of the world. Matthew Arnold describes the "sea of faith" (20), the divine protection of religious devotion, as an encompassing "bright girdle furl'd" (22) that is now retreating before human reason, "the breath of the night-wind" (25).

Task Write about the final stanza of the poem, Dover Beach.

In the final stanza of "Dover Beach", Matthew Arnold writes "Ah, love, let us be true / To one another! for the world which seems / To lie before us like a land of dreams, / So various, so beautiful, so new, / Hath really neither joy, nor love, or light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;"

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(28-33). In these emotionally charged lines Arnold pleas that they cling to each other against a land that is beautiful as only an exterior to an unfeeling, Godless world. The beautiful world, the world of the Romantic, is a lie; there is only the callous Modern world, devoid of answered hopes or prayers. Matthew Arnold writes in a very similar fashion to William Wordsworth, "we are here as on a darkling plain" (34), to convey how we stand in the darkness of our contemporary lifestyle and must now suffer with our realization of secular doctrine and the destruction of God.

Matthew Arnold's modern sensibility shines through like a poetic eulogy, a poignant lamentation for the future of mankind in a world without spirituality. The beauty of the Dover Beach, that Matthew Arnold describes serves as only a momentary elation that soon descends into an ominous melancholia of understanding that none of the emotion that he finds in the landscape is real.

Did u know? To Matthew Arnold, Dover Beach is sour manna, poisoning his creativity as it feeds it.

Summary

The Poet, Mathew Arnold is standing by the seashore and watching the gentle waves splashing the sandy shores of the Straits. There is a weak breeze that blows gently and the sea looks calm for the night. The tide is full of potential yet under self control and the moon looks bright as it shines its beams on the quiet sea. From the French Coast across the English Channel to the high sea cliffs of England, the light shines pleasantly and softly, and gets weakened towards the tranquil bay of England.

The poet tells his companion to come to the window of his cabin and enjoy the sweet aroma of the night air. Watching the seashore from this height, one can only witness the waters of the sea that acts as a catalyst when they touch the moonlit blended Colour of the sands. Sometimes they hear the roar of the sea when the pebbles cross over to the high sandy beaches and move back suddenly with the withdrawing waves. This phenomenon continues every evening throughout the night with a slow trembling note and the presence of melancholy is felt.

The poet makes his reference to 'Sophocles' a famous Greek dramatist long ago, of the 5th Century B.C. to a passage in his play 'Antigone'(line-583). Here the same eternal note of sadness can be heard on the 'Aegaean': an elongated embayment of the Mediterranean Sea, between Southern Balkans and Anatolia. This brought to the dramatist's mind the muddy movement of the tide away from the land and its flow, the tide of misfortune that rules human misery. That same similar sound can be heard in the thoughts from the distant sea in the north.

The mighty sea was once a beholder of faith with its vastness that touches all the shores of the earth around the globe, lay folded like a bright girdle cord worn around the waist and rolled up fastened and firm. Yet now, the sounds of the waves in the sea are only notes of melancholy; long drawn; advancing and retreating at the breath of the night wind that blows down the vast yet dull and gloomy edges of the bare shingles of the world, the beaches that are covered with coarse sand and large stones.

The poet finally appeals to his beloved companion to be honest with each other, for the world that they live in, which looks so beautiful and new, and lay before them like a land of dreams, does not have joy, love or spiritual light. There is no certainty for help in times of trouble and peace. All the mortals live in this world in a dark state of mind and the struggle for survival is no less different from ignorant armies that fight throughout the night.

12.2.2 Theme and Subject

The first stanza opens with the description of a nightly scene at the seaside. The lyrical self calls his addressee to the window, to share the visual beauty of the scene. Then he calls her attention to the

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aural experience, which is somehow less beautiful. The lyrical self projects his own feelings of melancholy on to the sound of "the grating roar /Of pebbles, which the waves draw back, and fling/ At their return, up the high strand" (ll.9-11). This sound causes an emotion of "sadness" (l.14) in him.

The second stanza introduces the Greek author Sophocles' idea of "the turbid ebb and flow of human misery" (ll.17-18). A contrast is formed to the scenery of the previous stanza. Sophocles apparently heard the similar sound at the "Aegean" sea (l. 16) and thus developed his ideas. Arnold then reconnects this idea to the present. Although there is a distance in time and space ("Aegean" — "northern sea" (L. 20)), the general feeling prevails.

In the third stanza, the sea is turned into the "Sea of Faith" (l.21), which is a metaphor for a time (probably the Middle Ages) when religion could still be experienced without the doubt that the modern (Victorian) age brought about through Darwinism, the Industrial revolution, Imperialism, a crisis in religion, etc.) Arnold illustrates this by using an image of clothes ('Kleidervergleich'). When religion was still intact, the world was dressed ("like the folds of a bright girdle furled" (l. 23)). Now that this faith is gone, the world lies there stripped naked and bleak. ("the vast edges drear/ And naked shingles of the world" (ll. 27-28))

The fourth and final stanza begins with a dramatic pledge by the lyrical self. He asks his love to be "true" (l.29), meaning faithful, to him. ("Ah, love, let us be true /To one another!" (ll. 29-30)). For the beautiful scenery that presents itself to them ("for the world, which seems/ To lie before us like a land of dreams,/ So various, so beautiful, so new" (ll.30-32)) is really not what it seems to be. On the contrary, as he accentuates with a series of denials, this world does not contain any basic human values. These have disappeared, along with the light and religion and left humanity in darkness. "We" (l.35) could just refer to the lyrical self and his love, but it could also be interpreted as the lyrical self addressing humanity. The pleasant scenery turns into a "darkling plain" (l. 35), where only hostile, frightening sounds of fighting armies can be heard:

And we are here as on a darkling plain

Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night." (ll.35-37).

According to Ian Hamilton, these lines refer to a passage in Thukydides, The Battle of Epipolae, where — in a night encounter — the two sides could not distinguish friend from foe" (144-45).

Analysis

"Dover Beach" is a difficult poem to analyze, and some of its passages and metaphors have become so well-known that they are hard to see with "fresh eyes". Arnold begins with a naturalistic and detailed nightscape of the beach at Dover in which auditory imagery plays a significant role ("Listen! you hear the grating roar"). The beach, however, is bare, with only a hint of humanity in a light that "gleams and is gone". Reflecting the traditional notion that the poem was written during Arnold's honeymoon, one critic notes that "the speaker might be talking to his bride".

The sea is calm to-night.

The tide is full, the moon lies fair

Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light

Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,

Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.

Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!

Only, from the long line of spray

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Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in

Arnold looks at two aspects of this naturalistic scene, its sounds cape (in the first and second stanza) and the retreating action of the tide (in the third stanza). He hears the sound of the sea as "the eternal note of sadness". Sophocles, a 5th century BC Greek playwright who wrote tragedies on fate and the will of the gods, also heard this same sound as he stood upon the shore of the Aegean Sea. Critics differ widely on how to interpret this image of the Greek Classical age. One critic sees a difference between Sophocles in the classical age of Greece interpreting the "note of sadness" humanistically, while Arnold in the industrial nineteenth century hears in this sound the retreat of religion and faith. A more recent critic connects the two as artists, Sophocles the tragedian, Arnold the lyric poet, each attempting through words to transform this note of sadness into "a higher order of experience".

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

Having examined the soundscape, Arnold turns to the action of the tide itself and sees in its retreat a metaphor for the loss of faith in the modern age, once again expressed in an auditory image ("But now I only hear/Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar"). This third stanza begins with an image not of sadness, but of "joyous fulness" similar in beauty to the image with which the poem opens.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world

The final stanza begins with an appeal to love, then moves on to the famous ending metaphor. Critics have varied in their interpretation of the first two lines of this stanza; one calls them a "perfunctory gesture...swallowed up by the poem's powerfully dark picture", while another sees in them "a stand against a world of broken faith". Midway between these is the interpretation of one of Arnold's biographers who describes being "true/To one another" as "a precarious notion" in a world that has become "a maze of confusion".

The metaphor with which the poem ends is most likely an allusion to a passage in Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides describes an ancient battle which occurred on a

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similar beach during the invasion of Sicily by the Athenians. The battle took place at night; the attacking army became disoriented while fighting in the darkness and many of their soldiers inadvertently killed each other. This final image has also been variously interpreted by the critics. The "darkling plain" of the final line has been described as Arnold's "central statement" of the human condition. A more recent critic has seen the final line as "only metaphor" and thus susceptible to the "uncertainty" of poetic language.

> Ah, love, let us be true
> To one another! for the world, which seems
> To lie before us like a land of dreams,
> So various, so beautiful, so new,
> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
> Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
> And we are here as on a darkling plain
> Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
> Where ignorant armies clash by night.

"The poem's discourse", Honan tells us, "shifts literally and symbolically from the present, to Sophocles on the Aegean, from Medieval Europe back to the present, and the auditory and visual images are dramatic and mimetic and didactic. Exploring the dark terror that lies beneath his happiness in love, the speaker resolves to love—and exigencies of history and the nexus between lovers are the poem's real issues. That lovers may be 'true/To one another' is a precarious notion: love in the modern city momentarily gives peace, but nothing else in a post-medieval society reflects or confirms the faithfulness of lovers. Devoid of love and light the world is a maze of confusion left by 'retreating' faith."

Critics have questioned the unity of the poem, noting that the sea of the opening stanza does not appear in the final stanza, while the "darkling plain" of the final line is not apparent in the opening. Various solutions to this problem have been proffered. One critic saw the "darkling plain" with which the poem ends as comparable to the "naked shingles of the world". "Shingles" here means flat beach cobbles, characteristic of some wave-swept coasts. Another found the poem "emotionally convincing" even if its logic may be questionable. The same critic notes that "the poem upends our expectations of metaphor" and sees in this the central power of the poem. The poem's historicism creates another complicating dynamic. Beginning in the present it shifts to the classical age of Greece, then (with its concerns for the sea of faith) it turns to Medieval Europe, before finally returning to the present. The form of the poem itself has drawn considerable comment. Critics have noted the careful diction in the opening description, the overall, spell-binding rhythm and cadence of the poem and its dramatic character. One commentator sees the strophe-antistrophe of the ode at work in the poem, with an ending that contains something of the "cata-strophe" of tragedy. Finally, one critic sees the complexity of the poem's structure resulting in "the first major 'free-verse' poem in the language.

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

6. "Dover Beach" is written in:
   (a) iambic pentameter.
   (b) unrhymed free verse.
   (c) free verse with occasional rhymes.
   (d) fully rhymed free verse.

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7. The poem is set:
   (a) on the English coast on a calm, moonlit night.
   (b) on the French coast on a calm, moonlit night.
   (c) on a darkling plain.
   (d) on the English coast on a stormy night.
8. The roar of pebbles flung by the waves makes the speaker think of
   (a) the steady march of human progress.
   (b) the unconquerable spirit of the generations of humanity.
   (c) the eternal note of sadness.
   (d) the beauty and strength of nature.
9. The reference to Sophocles is intended to suggest
   (a) the irrelevance of the long-ago past to present-day issues.
   (b) the ability of great art to heal the spirit.
   (c) the uselessness of culture in dealing with the real world.
   (d) the universality of the tragic in human experience.
10. The image in the poem's last three lines is an example of
   (a) metaphor. (b) simile.
   (c) allusion.

12.3 W.B.Yeats: Introduction of the Author and his Poem: A Prayer for My Daughter

William Butler Yeats was an Irish poet and playwright, and one of the foremost figures of 20th century literature. A pillar of both the Irish and British literary establishments, in his later years Yeats served as an Irish Senator for two terms. He was a driving force behind the Irish Literary Revival and, along with Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn, and others, founded the Abbey Theatre, where he served as its chief during its early years. In 1923 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for what the Nobel Committee described as "inspired poetry, which in a highly artistic form gives expression to the spirit of a whole nation." He was the first Irishman so honoured. Yeats is generally considered one of the few writers who completed their greatest works after being awarded the Nobel Prize; such works include The Tower (1928) and The Winding Stair and Other Poems (1929).

Yeats was born and educated in Dublin but spent his childhood in County Sligo. He studied poetry in his youth and from an early age was fascinated by both Irish legends and the occult. Those topics feature in the first phase of his work, which lasted roughly until the turn of the 20th century. His earliest volume of verse was published in 1889 and those slow-paced and lyrical poems display debts to Edmund Spenser, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and the Pre-Raphaelite poets. From 1900, Yeats' poetry grew more physical and realistic. He largely renounced the transcendental beliefs of his youth, though he remained preoccupied with physical and spiritual masks, as well as with cyclical theories of life.

Yeats is generally considered one of the twentieth century's key English language poets. He was a Symbolist poet, in that he used allusive imagery and symbolic structures throughout his career. Yeats chose words and assembled them so that, in addition to a particular meaning, they suggest other abstract thoughts that may seem more significant and resonant. His use of symbols is usually something physical that is both itself and a suggestion of other, perhaps immaterial, timeless qualities. Unlike other modernists who experimented with free verse, Yeats was a master of the traditional forms. The impact of modernism on his work can be seen in the increasing abandonment of the more conventionally poetic diction of his early work in favour of the more austere language and

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more direct approach to his themes that increasingly characterises the poetry and plays of his middle period, comprising the volumes In the Seven Woods, Responsibilities and The Green Helmet. His later poetry and plays are written in a more personal vein, and the works written in the last twenty years of his life include mention of his son and daughter, as well as meditations on the experience of growing old. In his poem, "The Circus Animals' Desertion", he describes the inspiration for these late works:

Now that my ladder's gone
I must lie down where all the ladders start
In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.

During 1929, he stayed at Thoor Ballylee near Gort in County Galway (where Yeats had his summer home since 1919) for the last time. Much of the remainder of his life was lived outside of Ireland, although he did lease Riversdale house in the Dublin suburb of Rathfarnham in 1932. He wrote prolifically through his final years, and published poetry, plays, and prose. In 1938, he attended the Abbey for the final time to see the premier of his play Purgatory. His Autobiographies of William Butler Yeats was published that same year.

While Yeats' early poetry drew heavily on Irish myth and folklore, his later work was engaged with more contemporary issues, and his style underwent a dramatic transformation. His work can be divided into three general periods. The early poems are lushly pre-Raphaelite in tone, self-consciously ornate, and, at times, according to unsympathetic critics, stilted. Yeats began by writing epic poems such as The Isle of Statues and The Wanderings of Oisin. His other early poems are lyrics on the themes of love or mystical and esoteric subjects.

Did u know? Yeats' middle period saw him abandon the pre-Raphaelite character of his early work and attempt to turn himself into a Landor-style social ironist.

12.3.1 A Prayer for my Daughter: Text

Once more the storm is howling, and half hid
Under this cradle-hood and coverlid
My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle
But Gregory's wood and one bare hill
Whereby the haystack- and roof-levelling wind,
Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;
And for an hour I have walked and prayed
Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.

I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour
And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,
And under the arches of the bridge, and scream
In the elms above the flooded stream;
Imagining in excited reverie
That the future years had come,
Dancing to a frenzied drum,
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea

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May she be granted beauty and yet not
Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,
Or hers before a looking-glass, for such,
Being made beautiful overmuch,
Consider beauty a sufficient end,
Lose natural kindness and maybe
The heart-revealing intimacy
That chooses right, and never find a friend.

Helen being chosen found life flat and dull
And later had much trouble from a fool,
While that great Queen, that rose out of the spray,
Being fatherless could have her way
Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man.
It's certain that fine women eat
A crazy salad with their meat
Whereby the Horn of plenty is undone.

In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;
Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned
By those that are not entirely beautiful;
Yet many, that have played the fool
For beauty's very self, has charm made wise.
And many a poor man that has roved,
Loved and thought himself beloved,
From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes.

May she become a flourishing hidden tree
That all her thoughts may like the linnet be,
And have no business but dispensing round
Their magnanimities of sound,
Nor but in merriment begin a chase,
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.
O may she live like some green laurel
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

My mind, because the minds that I have loved,
The sort of beauty that I have approved,
Prosper but little, has dried up of late,
Yet knows that to be choked with hate

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May well be of all evil chances chief.
If there's no hatred in a mind
Assault and battery of the wind
Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.

An intellectual hatred is the worst,
So let her think opinions are accursed.
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born
Out of the mouth of plenty's horn,
Because of her opinionated mind
Barter that horn and every good
By quiet natures understood
For an old bellows full of angry wind?
Considering that, all hatred driven hence,
The soul recovers radical innocence
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,
And that its own sweet will is Heaven's will;
She can, though every face should scowl
And every windy quarter howl
Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

And may her bridegroom bring her to a house
Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;
For arrogance and hatred are the wares
Peddled in the thoroughfares.
How but in custom and in ceremony
Are innocence and beauty born?
Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,
And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939), the celebrated Irish poet, the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923, needs no introduction. The Irish identity was very strong in him and as an active member of the Irish National Revival; he tried his best to add Celtic legends to evoke the glorious past of his land. In a time when the world was much fragmented, he endeavored to create a unified perspective of things that is cohesive and all encompassing.

Notes The poem is an intense expression of how Yeats felt after his daughter Anne was born although the ideas conveyed go far beyond the personal.

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12.3.2 Theme of the Poem

The poem portrays how a father, who has been blessed with a daughter, prays for the future happiness and welfare of her. The poet hopes that instead of growing up to be a very beautiful woman, his daughter should be blessed with the attributes of a virtuous and great soul. She should be well-mannered and full of humility rather than being strongly opinionated, to avoid intellectual detestation because that can drown her in misery.

Summary

In the beginning, Yeats talks about the storm having commenced brewing in the seas. Between his newly born daughter and the sea, there stand a bare hill and Gregory's woods which might not thwart the storm from reaching the helpless infant. The father is naturally worried as he senses the gale striking the tower and the undersides of the bridges. To his mind, the storm presages the future of her daughter having arrived with a rage, mounting from the seeming innocence of the sea. As a father, the poet wishes beauty for her daughter but not such voluptuousness that would engross others to distraction or make her vain.

He does not want her daughter to be bereft of kindness nor does he want her to fail in choosing the persons with whom she will be friendly. The father shudders at the thought of her daughter's turning to be another Helen of Troy, who couldn't help being unfaithful as she was so beautiful. Some lovely women like the queen who had not had her father imposing useful restraints upon her, chose an ordinary smith with warped legs, instead of marrying a handsome yet virtuous man matching her handsome looks and social standing. It is strange how exquisitely beautiful women often choose 'a crazy salad' (an undeserving husband) to go 'with their meat' (rich food or their great beauty).

His daughter should realize that she should be deserving of winning human hearts. She should not be like those crafty women who employ their charms to use people to their advantage. It is true that men fall head over heels for stunning females but it is really the compassion of the women which they get enamored by in the end. The father in the poet is keen that her daughter should be like a tree giving succour and shade to people when she grows up and her feelings should be like the sweet song of the linnet that spreads joy for the sake of doing so. It is very likely that she will sometime desire something intensely in a wrong spirit or engage in some strife at times but let them be transient and not very serious. Let her be like an evergreen tree; let her send her roots into the depth of her good convictions standing at the same place.

Task Write short note on the theme of the poem, "A Prayer for my Daughter".

The poet is rueful that his running after the people he liked or the kind of gorgeousness that he was infatuated with, could not satiate him as he wanted and that he is weary of all the barrenness that has enveloped him now. He seems to get momentarily confused as to what could be the right sort of beauty. He has however no hatred toward anyone as he is absolutely sure that it is the worst kind of malevolence that could poison his life. He wants her daughter also to learn this truth before she allows her to be ruled by the negative force of hatred because such a mindset will save her from inviting harsh criticism or abuses being showered upon her. The poet would not like her daughter to be self-opinionated as that could lead her to practicing intellectual loathing which the poet considers to be the worst kind of malady in a human being.

He recollects coming in close contact with a beautiful and accomplished woman who had to give away everything by being strongly biased. The truth rings clearly in the poet's mind that by removing all hatred from one's mind, the soul not only regains its innocence but also embarks on the journey of delighting in itself. Since the spirit of the soul is the will of God, he fervently prays that his daughter should be able to discover her soul and be happy in the face of any storm or disapproval.

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And finally, as a father, he hopes that she will be betrothed to a man who has for ever steered away from detestation and arrogance which is so common everywhere. Let the house of her husband be comfortable and secure but not at the expense of anyone.

12.4 W. B. Yeats: Second Coming and as an Irish Poet

12.4.1 Second Coming–Summary

Summary

The speaker describes a nightmarish scene: the falcon, turning in a widening "gyre" (spiral), cannot hear the falconer; "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold"; anarchy is loosed upon the world; "The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned." The best people, the speaker says, lack all conviction, but the worst "are full of passionate intensity."

Surely, the speaker asserts, the world is near a revelation; "Surely the Second Coming is at hand." No sooner does he think of "the Second Coming," then he is troubled by "a vast image of the Spiritus Mundi, or the collective spirit of mankind: somewhere in the desert, a giant sphinx ("A shape with lion body and the head of a man, / A gaze as blank and pitiless as the sun") is moving, while the shadows of desert birds reel about it. The darkness drops again over the speaker's sight, but he knows that the sphinx's twenty centuries of "stony sleep" have been made a nightmare by the motions of "a rocking cradle." And what "rough beast," he wonders, "its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

Form

"The Second Coming" is written in a very rough iambic pentameter, but the meter is so loose, and the exceptions so frequent, that it actually seems closer to free verse with frequent heavy stresses. The rhymes are likewise haphazard; apart from the two couplets with which the poem opens, there are only coincidental rhymes in the poem, such as "man" and "sun."

Commentary

Because of its stunning, violent imagery and terrifying ritualistic language, "The Second Coming" is one of Yeats's most famous and most anthologized poems; it is also one of the most thematically obscure and difficult to understand. (It is safe to say that very few people who love this poem could paraphrase its meaning to satisfaction.) Structurally, the poem is quite simple—the first stanza describes the conditions present in the world (things falling apart, anarchy, etc.), and the second surmises from those conditions that a monstrous Second Coming is about to take place, not of the Jesus we first knew, but of a new messiah, a "rough beast," the slouching sphinx rousing itself in the desert and lumbering toward Bethlehem. This brief exposition, though intriguingly blasphemous, is not terribly complicated; but the question of what it should signify to a reader is another story entirely.

Yeats spent years crafting an elaborate, mystical theory of the universe that he described in his book A Vision. This theory issued in part from Yeats's lifelong fascination with the occult and mystical, and in part from the sense of responsibility Yeats felt to order his experience within a structured belief system. The system is extremely complicated and not of any lasting importance—except for the effect that it had on his poetry, which is of extraordinary lasting importance. The theory of history Yeats articulated in A Vision centers on a diagram made of two conical spirals, one inside the other, so that the widest part of one of the spirals rings around the narrowest part of the other spiral, and vice versa. Yeats believed that this image (he called the spirals "gyres") captured the contrary motions inherent within the historical process, and he divided each gyre into specific regions that represented particular kinds of historical periods (and could also represent the psychological phases of an individual's development).

Notes

"The Second Coming" was intended by Yeats to describe the current historical moment (the poem appeared in 1921) in terms of these gyres. Yeats believed that the world was on the threshold of an apocalyptic revelation, as history reached the end of the outer gyre (to speak roughly) and began moving along the inner gyre. In his definitive edition of Yeats's poems, Richard J. Finneran quotes Yeats's own notes:

The end of an age, which always receives the revelation of the character of the next age, is represented by the coming of one gyre to its place of greatest expansion and of the other to its place of greatest contraction... The revelation [that] approaches will... take its character from the contrary movement of the interior gyre...

In other words, the world's trajectory along the gyre of science, democracy, and heterogeneity is now coming apart, like the frantically widening flight-path of the falcon that has lost contact with the falconer; the next age will take its character not from the gyre of science, democracy, and speed, but from the contrary inner gyre—which, presumably, opposes mysticism, primal power, and slowness to the science and democracy of the outer gyre. The "rough beast" slouching toward Bethlehem is the symbol of this new age; the speaker's vision of the rising sphinx is his vision of the character of the new world.

This seems quite silly as philosophy or prophecy (particularly in light of the fact that it has not come true as yet). But as poetry, and understood more broadly than as a simple reiteration of the mystic theory of A Vision, "The Second Coming" is a magnificent statement about the contrary forces at work in history, and about the conflict between the modern world and the ancient world. The poem may not have the thematic relevance of Yeats's best work, and may not be a poem with which many people can personally identify; but the aesthetic experience of its passionate language is powerful enough to ensure its value and its importance in Yeats's work as a whole.

12.4.2 Yeats as an Irish Poet

The Irish poet and dramatist William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) was the leader of the Irish Literary Renaissance during the early 20th century. Yeats's early lyrical poetry and drama drew inspiration from Irish legend and occult learning, but his later writing became increasingly engaged with his own time.

W. B. Yeats, b. Dublin, June 13, 1865, d. Jan. 28, 1939, was perhaps the greatest English-language poet of the 20th century. The major defining elements of Yeats's poetic career were visible by his 24th year. He had formed a profound attachment to the county of Sligo, where he stayed for long periods while living in London (1867-83); his interest in the occult led him to found (1885) the Dublin Hermetic Society and to join (1887) the London Lodge of Theosophists; his 1885 meeting with the nationalist John O'Leary prompted his discovery of Ireland as a literary subject and his commitment to the cause of Irish national identity; in 1889 he fell in love with Maud Gonne and published The Wanderings of Oisin. Yeats's lifework was an attempt to "hammer into unity" these evolving areas of his experience.

Between 1889 and 1902, Yeats sustained these original commitments. Irish myth and landscapes fill the poems of The Rose (1893). William Butler Yeats' edition of Blake (1893; with Edwin Ellis) influenced his own thought. He enshrined his unrequited love for Maud Gonne in the stylized, erotic, symbolic verses of The Wind among the Reeds (1899). A meeting (1896) with Lady Isabella Augusta Gregory and visits to Coole Park provided a model of social grace and generosity that was practically useful and, in his poetry, of symbolic importance. Head of the Order of the Golden Dawn (London, 1900), he became (1902) President of the Irish National Theatre Society (later the Abbey Theatre) for which he had written, among other plays, the patriotic Cathleen ni Houlihan (1902). Motivating such activities was Yeats's desire to raise national consciousness by cultural means and to extend his own awareness of himself as a poet, as a shaper not only of verses but of the world.

Notes

12.5 Summary

- The Lady of Shallot is a magical being who lives alone on an island upstream from King Arthur's Camelot.
- "Ulysses" is a poem in blank verse by the Victorian poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892), written in 1833 and published in 1842.
- The poem begins with a description of a river and a road that pass through long fields of barley and rye before reaching the town of Camelot.
- As the sky breaks out in rain and storm, the Lady of Shalott descends from her tower and finds a boat.
- "The Lady of Shalott" to be about the conflict between art and life.
- Ulysses declares that it is boring to stay in one place, and that to remain stationary is to rust rather than to shine;
- The Poet, Mathew Arnold is standing by the seashore and watching the gentle waves splashing the sandy shores of the Straits.
- The metaphor with which the poem ends is most likely an allusion to a passage in Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War.
- William Butler Yeats was an Irish poet and playwright, and one of the foremost figures of 20th century literature.

12.6 Keywords

Ulysses : "Ulysses" is a poem in blank verse by the Victorian poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)

Idylls of the King : Idylls of the King, published between 1856 and 1885, is a cycle of twelve narrative poems by the English poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

King Arthur : King Arthur is a legendary British leader of the late 5th and early 6th centuries, who, according to medieval histories and romances, led the defence of Britain against Saxon invaders in the early 6th century.

The Second Coming : "The Second Coming" was intended by Yeats to describe the current historical moment (the poem appeared in 1921) in terms of these gyres.

W.B.Yeats : William Butler Yeats was born in County Dublin on June 13, 1865.

12.7 Review Questions

1. Describe the analysis of the Lord Tennyson's, "The Lady of Shallot and Ulysses".
2. Critically appreciate the Mathew Arnold's "Dover beach".
3. Discuss the Introduction of the W.B.Yeats and his poem, "A prayer for my daughter".
4. Examine the theme of W.B.Yeats's, "Second Coming".
5. Consider W.B.Yeats as an Irish poet.

Answers: Self Assessment

1.	(c)	2. (c)	3. (d)	4. (b)	5. (d)
6.	(d)	7. (a)	8. (c)	9. (d)	10. (b)

12.8 Further Readings

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Books

W. B. Yeats: a critical introduction — Stan Smith
The Collected poems of W.B.Yeats — W.B.Yeats
Lord Tennyson: a biographical sketch — Henry James
Selected Poems Tennyson — Alfred Lord Tennyson

Online links

http://classiclit.about.com/od/ladyofshallott/fr/aafpr_shalott.htm
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lady_of_Shalott
http://iscexamnotes-content.blogspot.in/2010/07/

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Unit 13: Hughes and T.S. Eliot

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the biography of Ted Hughes

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- Describe the detailed analysis of the poem, "The Thought Fox"
- Describe the analysis of the poem, "Thrushes"
- Understand the biography of T.S. Eliot
- Explain the detailed analysis of Eliot's "The Waste Land"
- Discuss Ted Hughes as an Animal Poet

Introduction

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965) was born in St. Louis, Missouri, of an old New England family. He was educated at Harvard and did graduate work in philosophy at the Sorbonne, Harvard, and Merton College, Oxford. He settled in England, where he was for a time a schoolmaster and a bank clerk, and eventually literary editor for the publishing house Faber & Faber, of which he later became a director. He founded and, during the seventeen years of its publication (1922-1939), edited the exclusive and influential literary journal Criterion. In 1927, Eliot became a British citizen and about the same time entered the Anglican Church.

Eliot has been one of the most daring innovators of twentieth-century poetry. Never compromising either with the public or indeed with language itself, he has followed his belief that poetry should aim at a representation of the complexities of modern civilization in language and that such representation necessarily leads to difficult poetry. Despite this difficulty his influence on modern poetic diction has been immense. Eliot's poetry from Prufrock (1917) to the Four Quartets (1943) reflects the development of a Christian writer: the early work, especially The Waste Land (1922), is essentially negative, the expression of that horror from which the search for a higher world arises. In Ash Wednesday (1930) and the Four Quartets this higher world becomes more visible; nonetheless Eliot has always taken care not to become a religious poet and often elittled the power of poetry as a religious force. However, his dramas Murder in the Cathedral (1935) and The Family Reunion (1939) are more openly Christian apologies. In his essays, especially the later ones, Eliot advocates a traditionalism in religion, society, and literature that seems at odds with his pioneer activity as a poet. But although the Eliot of Notes towards the Definition of Culture (1948) is an older man than the poet of The Waste Land, it should not be forgotten that for Eliot tradition is a living organism comprising past and present in constant mutual interaction. Eliot's plays Murder in the Cathedral (1935), The Family Reunion (1939), The Cocktail Party (1949), The Confidential Clerk (1954), and The Elder Statesman(1959) were published in one volume in 1962; Collected Poems 1909-62 appeared in 1963.

13.1 Ted Hughes: The Thought Fox

13.1.1 Introduction of the Poet

Edward James Hughes OM (17 August 1930 – 28 October 1998), more commonly known as Ted Hughes, was an English poet and children's writer. Critics routinely rank him as one of the best poets of his generation. Hughes was British Poet Laureate from 1984 until his death.

Hughes was married to the American poet Sylvia Plath, from 1956 until her death by suicide in 1963 at the age of 30. His part in the relationship became controversial to some feminists and (particularly) American admirers of Plath. His last poetic work, Birthday Letters (1998), explored their complex relationship. These poems make reference to Plath's suicide, but none of them addresses directly the circumstances of her death. A poem discovered in October 2010, Last letter, describes what happened during the three days leading up to Plath's suicide.

In 2008 The Times ranked Hughes fourth on their list of "The 50 greatest British writerssince 1945". On 22 March 2010, it was announced that Hughes would be commemorated with a memorial in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, to be installed in early 2011.

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Hughes' first collection, Hawk in the Rain (1957) attracted considerable critical acclaim. In 1959 he won the Galbraith prize which brought $5,000. His most significant work is perhaps Crow (1970), which whilst it has been widely praised also divided critics, combining an apocalyptic, bitter, cynical and surreal view of the universe with what sometimes appeared simple, childlike verse.

Notes In a 1971 interview with London Magazine, Hughes cited his main influences as including Blake, Donne, Hopkins and Eliot. And he mentioned also Schopenhauer, Robert Graves' book The White Goddess and The Tibetan Book of the Dead.

Hughes worked for 10 years on a prose poem, "Gaudete", which he hoped to have made into a film. It tells the story of the vicar of an English village who is carried off by elemental spirits, and replaced in the village by his enantiodromic double, a changeling, fashioned from a log, who nevertheless has the same memories as the original vicar. The double is a force of nature who organises the women of the village into a "love coven" in order that he may father a new messiah. When the male members of the community discover what is going on, they murder him. The epilogue consists of a series of lyrics spoken by the restored priest in praise of a nature goddess, inspired by Robert Graves's White Goddess. It was printed in 1977. Hughes was very interested in the relationship between his poetry and the book arts and many of his books were produced by notable presses and in collaborative editions with artists, for instance with Leonard Baskin.

In addition to his own poetry, Hughes wrote a number of translations of European plays, mainly classical ones his Tales from Ovid (1997) contains a selection of free verse translations from Ovid's Metamorphoses. He also wrote both poetry and prose for children, one of his most successful books being The Iron Man, written to comfort his children after Sylvia Plath's suicide. It later became the basis of Pete Townshend's rock opera of the same name, and of the animated film The Iron Giant.

Hughes was appointed as Poet Laureate in 1984 following the death of John Betjeman. It was later known that Hughes was second choice for the appointment. Philip Larkin, the preferred nominee, had declined, because of ill health and writer's block. Hughes served in this position until his death in 1998.

In 1992, Hughes published Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being, a monumental work inspired by Graves' The White Goddess. In Birthday Letters, his last collection, Hughes broke his silence on Plath, detailing aspects of their life together and his own behaviour at the time. The cover artwork was by their daughter Frieda. Hughes' definitive 1,333-page Collected Poems (Faber & Faber) appeared (posthumously) in 2003. A poem discovered in October 2010, "Last letter", describes what happened during the three days leading up to Plath's suicide. It was published in New Statesman on National Poetry Day, October 2010.

In 2011 several previously unpublished letters from Hughes to Craig Raine were published in the literary review Arete. They relate mainly to the process of editing Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being, and also contain a sequence of drafts of letters in which Raine attempts to explain to Hughes his disinclination to publish Hughes' poem The Cast in an anthology he was editing, on the grounds that it might open Hughes to further attack on the subject of Sylvia Plath. "Dear Ted, Thanks for the poem. It is very interesting and would cause a minor sensation" (4 April 1997). The poem was eventually published in Birthday Letters and Hughes makes a passing reference to this then unpublished collection: "I have a whole pile of pieces that are all-one way or another-little bombs for the studious and earnest to throw at me" (5 April 1997).

13.1.2 The Thought Fox – Text

I imagine this midnight moment's forest:

Something else is alive

Beside the clock's loneliness

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And this blank page where my fingers move.
Through the window I see no star:
Something more near
Though deeper within darkness
Is entering the loneliness:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow
A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;
Two eyes serve a movement, that now
And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow
Between trees, and warily a lame
Shadow lags by stump and in hollow
Of a body that is bold to come

Across clearings, an eye,
A widening deepening greenness,
Brilliantly, concentratedly,
Coming about its own business

13.1.3 Themes

Hughes' earlier poetic work is rooted in nature and, in particular, the innocent savagery of animals, and an interest from an early age. He wrote frequently of the mixture of beauty and violence in the natural world. Animals serve as a metaphor for his view on life: animals live out a struggle for the survival of the fittest in the same way that humans strive for ascendancy and success. Examples can be seen in the poems "Hawk Roosting" and "Jaguar".

The West Riding dialect of Hughes' childhood remained a staple of his poetry, his lexicon lending a texture that is concrete, terse, emphatic, economical yet powerful. The manner of speech renders the hard facts of things and wards off self-indulgence.

Did u know? Hughes later work is deeply reliant upon myth and the British bardic tradition, heavily inflected with a modernist, Jungian and ecological viewpoint. He re-worked classical and archetypal myth working with a conception of the dark sub-conscious.

13.1.4 Detailed Analysis

"The Thought-Fox" is a poem about writing a poem; it explicates the nature of literary inspiration and literary creation. The action of the poem takes place at midnight where the poet is sitting alone at his desk accompanied only by the ticking off the clock. The image evoked is one of quiet and solitude where the poet is cut off from the world ready to be transported by his literary imagination. The poet's imagination is like a presence which disturbs the stillness of the night, the stillness of things yet unknown, and is depicted as if creeping silently upon the poet evoking a sense of stealth:

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"Through the window I see no star:
Something more near
Though deeper within darkness
Is entering the loneliness:"

The night itself is of course a metaphor for the more intimate darkness of the poet's imagination and creative inspiration that creeps silently and without warning upon the poet, "cold, delicately as the dark snow". The mysterious nature of the stirrings of imagination is compared to the indistinct shadow of a fox that moves stealthily in the darkness of the night. The shadow in the night suggests the amorphousness and abstract nature of literary inspiration that sneaks in like a fox mysteriously and without warning. The fox seems to materialise out of the formlessness of the snow, it is a faint shadow against the snow that will take the form "of a body that is bold to come". The image of the fox taking shape is thus equivalent to the process of creative imagination, which slowly forms itself in the dark recesses of the poet's mind to produce a work of art:

"Brilliantly, concentratedly,
Coming about its own business
Till, with sudden sharp hot stink of fox
It enters the dark hole of the head."

The fox penetrates the deep and intimate darkness of the poet's mind to evoke the moment when the desirable vision is attained. The poem ends as it has begun, turning in full circle.

"The window is starless still; the clock ticks,
The page is printed."

The fox is the process of artistic creation that is almost a mystical experience forming itself out of nothingness through the poetic imagination. "And I suppose," Ted Hughes has written, "that long after I am gone, as long as a copy of the poem exists, every time anyone reads it the fox will get up somewhere out of the darkness and come walking towards them". The fox, therefore, also seems to represent the epiphanies of reading that embrace the reader when he becomes engrossed in reading a work of art.

Task Write a short note on "The Thought Fox."

Ted Hughes's "The Thought Fox" enacts the solitude that surrounds a work of art. In Hughes's poem, we perceive that the last line also has a sort of fatalism and a notion of wistfulness. For although, the last stanza expresses the excitement of poetic creation, the matter-of-factness of the last line seems to plunge us back to reality evoking an almost palpable sense of relief that the poem is over. The blank white page full of potentiality for poetry is now printed and the writer knows that the poem that has been written is always a pale reflection of the poem or poems that could have been written.

The Thought Fox has often been acknowledged as one of the most completely realised and artistically satisfying of the poems in Ted Hughes's first collection, The Hawk in the Rain. At the same time it is one of the most frequently anthologised of all Hughes's poems. In this essay I have set out to use what might be regarded as a very ordinary analysis of this familiar poem in order to focus attention on an aspect of Hughes's poetry which is sometimes neglected. My particular interest is in the

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underlying puritanism of Hughes's poetic vision and in the conflict between violence and tenderness which seems to be directly engendered by this puritanism.

'The thought-fox' is a poem about writing a poem. Its external action takes place in a room late at night where the poet is sitting alone at his desk. Outside the night is starless, silent, and totally black. But the poet senses a presence which disturbs him:

Through the window I see no star:
Something more near
Though deeper within darkness
Is entering the loneliness

The disturbance is not in the external darkness of the night, for the night is itself a metaphor for the deeper and more intimate darkness of the poet's imagination in whose depths an idea is mysteriously stirring. At first the idea has no clear outlines; it is not seen but felt–frail and intensely vulnerable. The poet's task is to coax it out of formlessness and into fuller consciousness by the sensitivity of his language. The remote stirrings of the poem are compared to the stirrings of an animal–a fox, whose body is invisible, but which feels its way forward nervously through the dark undergrowth:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow,
A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;

The half-hidden image which is contained within these lines is of soft snow brushing against the trees as it falls in dark flakes to the ground. The idea of the delicate dark snow evokes the physical reality of the fox's nose which is itself cold, dark and damp, twitching moistly and gently against twig and leaf. In this way the first feature of the fox is mysteriously defined and its wet black nose is nervously alive in the darkness, feeling its way towards us. But by inverting the natural order of the simile, and withholding the subject of the sentence, the poet succeeds in blurring its distinctness so that the fox emerges only slowly out of the formlessness of the snow. Gradually the fox's eyes appear out of the same formlessness, leading the shadowy movement of its body as it comes closer:

Two eyes serve a movement, that now
And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow
Between trees, and warily a lame
Shadow lags by stump and in hollow. ..

In the first two lines of this passage the rhythm of the verse is broken by the punctuation and the line-endings, while at the same time what seemed the predictable course of the rhyme-scheme is deliberately departed from. Both rhythmically and phonetically the verse thus mimes the nervous, unpredictable movement of the fox as it delicately steps forward, then stops suddenly to check the terrain before it runs on only to stop again. The tracks which the fox leaves in the snow are themselves duplicated by the sounds and rhythm of the line 'Sets neat prints into the snow'. The first three short words of this line are internal half-rhymes, as neat, as identical and as sharply outlined as the fox's paw-marks, and these words press down gently but distinctly into the soft open vowel of 'snow'. The fox's body remains indistinct, a silhouette against the snow. But the phrase 'lame shadow' itself evokes a more precise image of the fox, as it freezes alertly in its tracks, holding one front-paw in mid-air, and then moves off again like a limping animal. At the end of the stanza the words 'bold to come' are left suspended–as though the fox is pausing at the outer edge of some trees. The gap between the stanzas is itself the clearing which the fox, after hesitating warily, suddenly shoots across: 'Of a body that is bold to come / Across clearings. ..'

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At this point in the poem the hesitant rhythm of that single sentence which is prolonged over five stanzas breaks into a final and deliberate run. The fox has scented safety. After its dash across the clearing of the stanza-break, it has come suddenly closer, bearing down upon the poet and upon the reader:

an eye,

A widening deepening greenness,

Brilliantly, concentratedly,

Coming about its own business. ..

It is so close now that its two eyes have merged into a single green glare which grows wider and wider as the fox comes nearer, its eyes heading directly towards ours: 'Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox/It enters the dark hole of the head'. If we follow the 'visual logic' of the poem we are compelled to imagine the fox actually jumping through the eyes of the poet – with whom the reader of the poem is inevitably drawn into identification. The fox enters the lair of the head as it would enter its own lair, bringing with it the hot, sensual, animal reek of its body and all the excitement and power of the achieved vision.

The fox is no longer a formless stirring somewhere in the dark depths of the bodily imagination; it has been coaxed out of the darkness and into full consciousness. It is no longer nervous and vulnerable, but at home in the lair of the head, safe from extinction, perfectly created, its being caught for ever on the page. And all this has been done purely by the imagination. For in reality there is no fox at all, and outside, in the external darkness, nothing has changed: 'The window is starless still; the clock ticks, / The page is printed.' The fox is the poem, and the poem is the fox. 'And I suppose,' Ted Hughes has written, 'that long after I am gone, as long as a copy of the poem exists, every time anyone reads it the fox will get up somewhere out of the darkness and come walking towards them.'

After discussing 'The thought-fox' in his book The Art of Ted Hughes, Keith Sagar writes: 'Suddenly, out of the unknown, there it is, with all the characteristics of a living thing–"a sudden sharp hot stink of fox". A simple trick like pulling a kicking rabbit from a hat, but only a true poet can do it'. In this particular instance it seems to me that the simile Sagar uses betrays him into an inappropriate critical response His comparison may be apt in one respect, for it is certainly true that there is a powerful element of magic in the poem. But this magic has little to do with party-conjurors who pull rabbits out of top-hats. It is more like the sublime and awesome magic which is contained in the myth of creation, where God creates living beings out of nothingness by the mere fiat of his imagination.

The very sublimity and God-like nature of Hughes's vision can engender uneasiness. For Hughes's fox has none of the freedom of an animal. It cannot get up from the page and walk off to nuzzle its young cubs or do foxy things behind the poet's back. It cannot even die in its own mortal, animal way. For it is the poet's creature, wholly owned and possessed by him, fashioned almost egotistically in order to proclaim not its own reality but that of its imaginatively omnipotent creator. (I originally wrote these words before coming across Hughes's own discussion of the poem in Poetry in the Making: 'So, you see, in some ways my fox is better than an ordinary fox. It will live for ever, it will never suffer from hunger or hounds. I have it with me wherever I go. And I made it. And all through imagining it clearly enough and finding the living words'.

This feeling of uneasiness is heightened by the last stanza of the poem. For although this stanza clearly communicates the excitement of poetic creation, it seems at the same time to express an almost predatory thrill; it is as though the fox has successfully been lured into a hunter's trap. The bleak matter-of-factness of the final line–'The page is printed'–only reinforces the curious deadness

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of the thought-fox. If, at the end of the poem, there is one sense in which the fox is vividly and immediately alive, it is only because it has been pinned so artfully upon the page. The very accuracy of the evocation of the fox seems at times almost fussily obsessive. The studied and beautifully 'final' nature of the poem indicates that we are not in the presence of any untrained spontaneity, any primitive or naive vision. It might be suggested that the sensibility behind Hughes's poem is more that of an intellectual–an intellectual who, in rebellion against his own ascetic rationalism, feels himself driven to hunt down and capture an element of his own sensual and intuitive identity which he does not securely possess.

In this respect Hughes's vision is perhaps most nearly akin to that of D. H. Lawrence, who was also an intellectual in rebellion against his own rationalism, a puritan who never ceased to quarrel with his own puritanism. But Lawrence's animal poems, as some critics have observed, are very different from those of Hughes. Lawrence has a much greater respect for the integrity and independence of the animals he writes about. In 'Snake' he expresses remorse for the rationalistic, 'educated' violence which he inflicts on the animal. And at the end of the poem he is able, as it were, retrospectively to allow his dark sexual, sensual, animal alter ego to crawl off into the bowels of the earth, there to reign alone and supreme in a kingdom where Lawrence recognises he can have no part. Hughes, in 'The thought-fox' at least, cannot do this. It would seem that, possessing his own sensual identity even less securely than Lawrence, he needs the 'sudden sharp hot stink of fox' to pump up the attenuated sense he has of the reality of his own body and his own feelings. And so he pins the fox upon the page with the cruel purity of artistic form and locates its lair inside his own head. And the fox lives triumphantly as an idea–as a part of the poet's own identity–but dies as a fox.

If there is a difference between 'The thought-fox' and the animal poems of Lawrence there is also, of course, a difference between Hughes's poetic vision and that kind of extreme scientific rationalism which both Lawrence and Hughes attack throughout their work. For in the mind of the orthodox rationalist the fox is dead even as an idea. So it is doubly dead and the orthodox rationalist, who is always a secret puritan, is more than happy about this. For he doesn't want the hot sensual reek of fox clinging to his pure rational spirit, reminding him that he once possessed such an obscene thing as a body.

This difference may appear absolute. But it seems to me that it would be wrong to regard it as such, and that there is a much closer relationship between the sensibility which is expressed in Hughes's poem and the sensibility of 'puritanical rationalism' than would generally be acknowledged. The orthodox rationalist, it might be said, inflicts the violence of reason on animal sensuality in an obsessive attempt to eliminate it entirely. Hughes in 'The thought-fox' unconsciously inflicts the violence of an art upon animal sensuality in a passionate but conflict-ridden attempt to incorporate it into his own rationalist identity.

The conflict of sensibility which Hughes unconsciously dramatises in 'The thought-fox' runs through all his poetry. On the one hand there is in his work an extraordinary sensuous and sensual generosity which coexists with a sense of abundance and a capacity for expressing tenderness which are unusual in contemporary poetry .These qualities are particularly in evidence in some of the most mysteriously powerful of all his poems–poems such as 'Crow's undersong', 'Littleblood', 'Full moon and little Frieda' and 'Bride and groom lie hidden for three days' .On the other hand his poetry–and above all his poetry in Crow –is notorious for the raging intensity of its violence, a violence which, by some critics at least, has been seen as destructive of all artistic and human values. Hughes himself seems consistently to see his own poetic sensitivity as 'feminine' and his poetry frequently gives the impression that he can allow himself to indulge this sensitivity only within a protective shell of hard, steely 'masculine' violence.

In 'The thought-fox' itself this conflict of sensibility appears in such an attenuated or suppressed form that it is by no means the most striking feature of the poem. But, as I have tried to show, the conflict may still be discerned. It is present above all in the tension between the extraordinary sensuous delicacy of the image which Hughes uses to describe the fox's nose and the predatory,

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impulse which seems to underlie the poem – an impulse to which Hughes has himself drawn attention by repeatedly comparing the act of poetic creation to the process of capturing or killing small animals. Indeed it might be suggested that the last stanza of the poem records what is, in effect, a ritual of tough 'manly' posturing. For in it the poet might be seen as playing a kind of imaginative game in which he attempts to outstare the fox – looking straight into its eyes as it comes closer and closer and refusing to move, refusing to flinch, refusing to show any sign of 'feminine' weakness. The fox itself does not flinch or deviate from its course. It is almost as though, in doing this, it has successfully come through an initiation-ritual to which the poet has unconsciously submitted it; the fox which is initially nervous, circumspect, and as soft and delicate as the dark snow, has proved that it is not 'feminine' after all but tough, manly and steely willed 'brilliantly, concentratedly, coming about its own business'. It is on these conditions alone, perhaps, that its sensuality can be accepted by the poet without anxiety.

Whether or not the last tentative part of my analysis is accepted, it will perhaps be allowed that the underlying pattern of the poem is one of sensitivity-within- toughness; it is one in which a sensuality or sensuousness which might sometimes be characterised as 'feminine' can be incorporated into the identity only to the extent that it has been purified by, or subordinated to, a tough, rational, artistic will.

The same conflict of sensibility which is unconsciously dramatised in 'The thought-fox' also appears, in an implicit form, in one of the finest and most powerful poems in Lupercal, 'Snowdrop':

> Now is the globe shrunk tight
>
> Round the mouse's dulled wintering heart.
>
> Weasel and crow, as if moulded in brass,
>
> Move through an outer darkness Not in their right minds,
>
> With the other deaths. She, too, pursues her ends,
>
> Brutal as the stars of this month,
>
> Her pale head heavy as metal.

The poem begins by evoking, from the still and tiny perspective of the hibernating mouse, a vast intimacy with the tightening body of the earth. But the numbness of 'wintering heart' undermines the emotional security which might be conveyed by the initial image. The next lines introduce a harsh predatory derangement into nature through which two conventionally threatening animals, the weasel and the crow, move 'as if moulded in brass'. It is only at this point, after a sense of petrified and frozen vitality has been established, that the snowdrop is, as it were, 'noticed' by the poem. What might be described as a conventional and sentimental personification of the snowdrop is actually intensified by the fact that 'she' can be identified only from the title. This lends to the pronoun a mysterious power through which the poem gestures towards an affirmation of 'feminine' frailty and its ability to survive even the cruel rigour of winter. But before this gesture can even be completed it is overlaid by an evocation of violent striving:

> She, too, pursues her ends,
>
> Brutal as the stars of this month,
>
> Her pale head heavy as metal.

The last line is finely balanced between the fragility of 'pale' and the steeliness of 'metal'–a word whose sound softens and moderates its sense .The line serves to evoke a precise visual image of the snowdrop, the relative heaviness of whose flower cannot be entirely supported by its frail stem. But at the same time the phrase 'her pale head' minimally continues the personification which is first established by the pronoun 'she'. In this way the feminine snowdrop–a little incarnation, almost, of

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the White Goddess–is located within that world of frozen and sleeping vitality which is created by the poem, a vitality which can only be preserved, it would seem, if it is encased within a hard, metallic, evolutionary will.

The beauty of this poem resides precisely in the way that a complex emotional ambivalence is reflected through language. But if we can withdraw ourselves from the influence of the spell which the poem undoubtedly casts, the vision of the snowdrop cannot but seem an alien one. What seems strange about the poem is the lack of any recognition that the snowdrop survives not because of any hidden reserves of massive evolutionary strength or will, but precisely because of its frailty–its evolutionary vitality is owed directly to the very delicacy, softness and flexibility of its structure. In Hughes's poem the purposeless and consciousless snowdrop comes very near to being a little Schopenhauer philosophising in the rose-garden, a little Stalin striving to disguise an unmanly and maidenly blush behind a hard coat of assumed steel. We might well be reminded of Hughes's own account of the intentions which lay behind his poem 'Hawk roosting'. 'Actually what I had in mind', Hughes has said, 'was that in this hawk Nature is thinking … I intended some creator like the Jehovah in Job but more feminine.' But, as Hughes himself is obliged to confess, 'He doesn't sound like Isis, mother of the gods, which he is. He sounds like Hitler's familiar spirit.' In an attempt to account for the gap between intention and performance Hughes invokes cultural history: 'When Christianity kicked the devil out of Job what they actually kicked out was Nature. ..and nature became the devil.' This piece of rationalisation, however, seems all too like an attempt to externalise a conflict of sensibility which is profoundly internal. The conflict in question is the same as that which may be divined both in 'The thought-fox' and in 'Snowdrop' , in which a frail sensuousness which might be characterised as , 'feminine' can be accepted only after it has been subordinated to a tough and rational will.

The conflict between violence and tenderness which is present in an oblique form throughout Hughes' early poetry is one that is in no sense healed or resolved in his later work. Indeed it might be suggested that much of the poetic and emotional charge of this later work comes directly from an intensification of this conflict and an increasingly explicit polarisation of its terms. The repressed tenderness of 'Snowdrop' or the tough steely sensibility which is expressed in 'Thrushes', with its idealisation of the 'bullet and automatic / Purpose' of instinctual life, is seemingly very different to the all but unprotected sensuous delicacy of 'Littleblood', the poem with which Hughes ends Crow:

> O littleblood, little boneless little skinless
>
> Ploughing with a linnet's carcase
>
> Reaping the wind and threshing the stones.
>
> Sit on my finger, sing in my ear, O littleblood.

But this poem must ultimately be located within the larger context which is provided by the Crow poems. This context is one of a massive unleashing of sadistic violence -a violence which is never endorsed by Hughes but which, nevertheless, seems to provide a kind of necessary psychological armour within which alone tenderness can be liberated without anxiety.

In pointing to the role which is played by a particular conflict of sensibility in Hughes's poetry I am not in any way seeking to undermine the case which can–and should–be made for what would conventionally be called Hughes's poetic 'greatness'. Indeed, my intention is almost the reverse of this. For it seems to me that one of the factors which moderates or diminishes the imaginative power of some of Hughes's early poetry is precisely the way in which an acute conflict which is central to his own poetic sensibility tends to be disguised or, suppressed. In Crow, which I take to be Hughes's most extraordinary poetic achievement to date, Hughes, almost for the first time, assumes imaginative responsibility for the puritanical violence which is present in his poetry from the very beginnings. In doing so he seems to take full possession of his own poetic powers. It is as

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though a conflict which had, until that point, led a shadowy and underworld existence, is suddenly cracked open in order to disgorge not only its own violence but also all that imaginative wealth and vitality which had been half locked up within it.

The most obvious precedent for such a violent eruption of imaginative powers is that which is provided by Shakespeare, and perhaps above all by King Lear. Lear is a play of extraordinary violence whose persistent image, as Caroline Spurgeon has observed, is that of a human body in anguished movement, tugged, wrenched, beaten, pierced, stung, scourged, dislocated, flayed, gashed, scalded, tortured, and finally broken on the rack'. But at the same time it is a play about a man who struggles to repossess his own tenderness and emotional vitality and to weep those tears which, at the beginning of the play, he contemptuously dismisses as soft, weak and womanly. The same conflict reappears throughout Shakespeare's poetry. We have only to recall Lady Macbeth's renunciation of her own 'soft' maternal impulses in order to appreciate the fluency of Shakespeare's own imaginative access to this conflict and the disturbing cruelty of its terms:

> I have given suck, and know
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,
> And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
> Have done to this. (I. vii)

The intense conflict between violence and tenderness which is expressed in these lines is, of course, in no sense one which will be found only in the poetic vision of Hughes and Shakespeare. It is present in poetry from the Old Testament onwards and indeed it might reasonably be regarded as a universal conflict, within which are contained and expressed some of the most fundamental characteristics of the human identity.

Any full investigation of the conflict and of its cultural significance would inevitably need to take account both of what Mark Spilka has called 'Lawrence's quarrel with tenderness' and of Ian Suttie's discussion of the extent and rigour of the 'taboo on tenderness' in our own culture. But such an investigation would also need to take into consideration a much larger cultural context, and perhaps above all to examine the way in which the Christian ideal of love has itself traditionally been expressed within the medium of violent apocalyptic fantasies.

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Who of the following did Ted Hughes influence?
   (a) Processing (programming language) (b) Sylvia Plath
   (c) Dewi Zephaniah Phillips (d) William Butler Yeats
2. Hughes studied English, anthropology and archaeology at ..... .
   (a) Trinity College, Cambridge (b) Peterhouse, Cambridge
   (c) Queens' College, Cambridge (d) Pembroke College, Cambridge
3. Which of the following titles did Ted Hughes have?
   (a) Brain-Dead Poets Society (b) Poet Laureate of Freemasonry
   (c) British Poet Laureate (d) The Distrest Poet

Notes

4. What proceeded Ted Hughes?

(a) Andrew Motion (b) Ted Hughes

(c) England (d) World War I

5. When did Ted Hughes die?

(a) 1998-08-23 (b) 1998-11-23

(c) 1998-10-28 (d) 1998-08-16

The investigation which I describe is clearly beyond the scope of this essay. My more modest aim here has been to draw attention to the role which is played by this conflict in two of the most hauntingly powerful of Ted Hughes's early poems and to suggest that Hughes's poetic powers are fully realised not when this conflict is resolved but when it is unleashed in its most violent form.

In taking this approach I am motivated in part by the feeling that the discussion of Hughes's poetry has sometimes been too much in thrall to a powerful cultural image of Hughes's poetic personality one which he himself has tended to project. In this image Hughes is above all an isolated and embattled figure who has set himself against the entire course both of modern poetry and of modern history. He is rather like the hero in one of his most powerful poems 'Stealing trout on a May morning', resolutely and stubbornly wading upstream, his feet rooted in the primeval strength of the river's bed as the whole course of modern history and modern puritanical rationalism floods violently past him in the opposite direction, bearing with it what Hughes himself has called 'mental disintegration under the super-ego of Moses and the self-anaesthetising schizophrenia of St Paul', and leaving him in secure possession of that ancient and archaic imaginative energy which he invokes in his poetry.

The alternative to this Romantic view of Hughes's poetic personality is to see Hughes's poetry as essentially the poetry of an intellectual, an intellectual who is subject to the rigours of 'puritanical rationalism' just as much as any other intellectual but who, instead of submitting to those rigours, fights against them with that stubborn and intransigent resolution which belongs only to the puritan soul.

In reality perhaps neither of these views is wholly appropriate, and the truth comes somewhere between the two. But what does seem clear is that when Hughes talks of modern civilisation as consisting in 'mental disintegration under the super-ego of Moses and the self-anaesthetising schizophrenia of St Paul' he is once again engaging in that characteristic strategy of externalising a conflict of sensibility which is profoundly internal. For it must be suggested that Paul's own 'schizophrenia' consisted in an acute conflict between the impulse towards tenderness, abundance and generosity and the impulse towards puritanical violence–the violence of chastity. It is precisely this conflict which seems to be buried in Hughes's early poetry and which, as I have suggested, eventually erupts in the poetry of Crow. If, in Crow, Hughes is able to explore and express the internalised violence of the rationalist sensibility with more imaginative power than any other modern poet, it is perhaps because he does so from within a poetic sensibility which is itself profoundly intellectual, and deeply marked by that very puritanical rationalism which he so frequently–and I believe justifiably–attacks.

13.2 Ted Hughes: Thrushes; Ted Hughes as an Animal Poet

13.2.1 Thrushes: Text of the Poem

Terrifying are the attent sleek thrushes on the lawn,

More coiled steel than living-a poised

Dark deadly eye, those delicate legs

Triggered to stirrings beyond sense - with a start, a bounce,

a stab

Notes

Overtake the instant and drag out some writhing thing.
No indolent procrastinations and no yawning states,
No sighs or head-scratchings. Nothing but bounce and stab
And a ravening second.

Is it their single-mind-sized skulls, or a trained
Body, or genius, or a nestful of brats
Gives their days this bullet and automatic
Purpose? Mozart's brain had it, and the shark's mouth
That hungers down the blood-smell even to a leak of its own
Side and devouring of itself: efficiency which
Strikes too streamlined for any doubt to pluck at it
Or obstruction deflect.

With a man it is otherwise. Heroisms on horseback,
Outstripping his desk-diary at a broad desk,
Carving at a tiny ivory ornament
For years: his act worships itself - while for him,
Though he bends to be blent in the prayer, how loud and
above what
Furious spaces of fire do the distracting devils
Orgy and hosannah, under what wilderness
Of black silent waters weep.

Ted Hughes' "Thrushes" is one of his frequently anthologized poems. The poet is enamoured at the violent streak in the thrushes rather than their singing ability. He is amused at their ability to "stab". They are by themselves 'sleek' or stylish. They are single-minded in purpose, and therefore very attentive. With their iron will, they come across as coils of steel rather than mundanely humane. The "dark deadly eye" foregrounds the scene fixed in its stare, and the poise they assume is indeed to be regarded. The fragile legs are triggered to stirrings beyond sense, that is, it is driven on instinct-"with a start, a bounce, a stab." Swiftly according to impulse, they prey on the writhing thing. They indulge in no irresolution, no lethargy and no postponing; they are characterized by immense presence of mind.

No indolent procrastinations and no yawning states,
No sighs or head-scratchings
It just takes a rapacious second for this predatory being to satisfy ts urge.

Task Explain, Ted Hughes is a nature poet.

Is it their single-mindedness characterized by their solid skulls, or their body that is inherently well-trained, or is it the undeterred genius, or the poet asks is it the "nestful of brats" or the lineage

Notes

with the killer-instinct. The adjectives "bullet" and "automatic" exemplify how the act looks automated, mechanized and triggered. Further, it also portrays how objective the act is, without depending on external considerations and extraneous factors. Mozart had this innate genius and artistic drive for music that was not out of any ulterior motive. It existed in its own right. It was unique, stemmed from his brain as an extended metaphor of his genius. It was not inclined towards fame or appreciation. Likewise, the shark is unflinching in its act of preying, to the extent of smelling out even a leak of its own blood. It is so proactive in its endeavor that it may devour itself if the situation demands.

Notes The poet concretizes its efficiency as a streamline that doubt cannot pluck at or likens it to a streak of light that is not reflected on obstruction.

13.2.2 Ted Hughes as an Animal Poet

Ted Hughes's ' nature poetry' comprises mainly of his poems that explore man's relation with 'animal life' and 'landscapes'-both constantly interacting with the elements of nature. His nature poetry predominantly deals with the problem of modern man's alienation from nature. It is also an attempt to reunite man with nature.

In Hughes's view, modern man has discarded his world of feelings, imagination and pure instincts which is true to nature. But he has done so, at the cost of his own existence. So, Hughes's nature poems, on the one hand, hint at modern man's present perilous existence and on the other, attempt to redeem man from his own predicament.

However, Hughes attributes modern man's alienation from nature to his self-consciousness or his rational consciousness, to his religious compunctions and finally to his slavery to science and technology.

In contradiction to modern man and his flaws Hughes's animals are endowed with certain significant qualities: they are distinctly non-rational in power, they are single minded in their action, self-centered, devoid of fantasy and act instinctually so as to condemn duality in man. Unlike man, they cope with elements perfectly to show their unity with nature and by innuendo, man's alienation from nature. Through these poems Hughes evokes the pre-historic world that was obviously connected with the lost instinctual energies and attempts to put man in touch with those lost archaic energies. P.R. King says that Hughes's animals are not mere descriptions of creatures but are intended as comments on aspects of human life.

13.2.3 Roles and Models of Animals

Thus Ted Hughes assumes a variety of roles as a fox, a hawk, a jaguar, an otter, a thrush, etc. Very often he is the protagonist as perceiver registering some startling or terrifying quality like the energy of the elemental energy, an immense pike, but making no claim to embody it in his own personality. At times, he can be a mere passive on-looker involving in recording and recreation of a slow movement in the midst of violence and suddenness. The voice or tone in almost all his poems is that of an omni scent narrator, and since Hughes is a poet of experience, his poetry, in this sense, is subjective and supremely and obsessively autobiographical. The following study of Hughes' animal poems exemplifies his attitude to nature and animals.

13.2.4 Animal Monologue—Glorification of Animal Totalitarianism

Hawk Roosting is a dramatic monologue, as told from the point of view of the hawk sitting on the top of a tree in a trance. He is a monomaniac and a solipsist. He is single minded in his pursuit of his prey.

Notes

He deals death to his victims and can crush them effortlessly. There is no 'falsifying dream' between his hooked head and hooked feet. Even in his sleep he contemplates killing and the simultaneity of his dream and achievement, denotes his unity with nature. The hawk sees himself as the apotheosis of power and thinks he is 'the self-styled ultimate heir of Creation'. He assumes that the whole creation is made suitable for his adaptation. The world revolves at his bidding and all the other creatures are only created for his prey':

It took the whole of Creation

To produce my foot, my each feather:

Now I hold Creation in my foot

Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly-

I kill where I please because it is all mine.

There is no sophistry in my body:

My manners are tearing off heads-

The allotment of death. (The Hawk Roosting, Lupercal,p.26)

There is no sophistry in his body and his manners mean simply tearing off heads. When he kills he does not think. He is not subject to self-doubt or self deception unlike men who are victims of dissociation and inner schisms within their personalities. When critics misunderstood 'Hawk Roosting' as a glorification of totalitarianism and fascism, Ted Hughes remarked:

The poem of mine usually cited for violence is the one about 'Hawk Roosting', this drowsy hawk sitting in a wood and talking to itself. That bird is accused of being a fascist….. the symbol of some horrible totalitarian genocidal dictator. Actually what I had in mind was that in this hawk Nature is thinking. Simply Nature. It's not so simple may be because Nature is not no longer simple. I intended some Creator like the Jehovah in Job but more feminine. When Christianity kicked the devil out of job what they actually kicked out was Nature… and Nature became the devil.

13.3 T.S. Eliot: The Waste Land (Non-detailed): Introduction to the Author and Text

13.3.1 Introduction to the Author

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis in 1888 to a family with prominent New England roots. Eliot largely abandoned his Midwestern roots and chose to ally himself with both New and Old England throughout his life. He attended Harvard as an undergraduate in 1906, was accepted into the literary circles, and had a predilection for 16th- and 17th-century poetry, the Italian Renaissance (particularly Dante), Eastern religion, and philosophy. Perhaps the greatest influences on him, however, were 19th-century French Symbolists such as Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Stephene Mallarme, and Eliot's favorite, Jules Laforgue. Eliot took from them their sensual yet precise attention to symbolic images, a feature that would be the hallmark of his brand of Modernism.

Eliot also earned a master's degree from Harvard in 1910 before studying in Paris and Germany. He settled in England in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I, studying at Oxford, teaching, and working at a bank. In 1915 he married British writer Vivienne Haigh-Wood (they would divorce in 1933), a woman prone to poor physical and mental health, and in November of 1921, Eliot had a nervous breakdown.

By 1917 Eliot had already achieved great success with his first book of poems, Prufrock and Other Observations (which included "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," a work begun in his days at Harvard). Eliot's reputation was bolstered by the admiration and aid of esteemed contemporary

Notes

poet Ezra Pound, the other tower of Modernist poetry. During Eliot's recuperation from his breakdown in a Swiss sanitarium, he wrote "The Waste Land," arguably the most influential English-languge poem ever written.

Eliot was now the voice of Modernism, and in London he expanded the breadth of his writing. In addition to writing poetry and editing it for various publications (he also founded the quarterly Criterion in 1922, editing it until its end in 1939), he wrote philosophical reviews and a number of critical essays. Many of these, such as "Tradition and the Individual Talent," have become classics, smartly and affectionately dissecting other poets while subliminally informing us about Eliot's own work. Eliot declared his preference for poetry that does away with the poet's own personality and poetry that uses the "objective correlative" of symbolic, meaningful, and often chaotic concrete imagery.

Eliot joined the Church of England in 1927, and his work afterward reflects his Anglican attitudes. The six-part poem "Ash Wednesday" (1930) and other religious works in the early part of the 1930s, while stellar in their own right, retrospectively feel like a warm-up for his epic "Four Quartets" (completed and published together in 1943). Eliot used his wit, philosophical preoccupation with time, and vocal range to examine further religious issues.

Task Write the biography of T.S. Eliot.

Eliot continued his Renaissance man ways by writing his first play, "Murder in the Cathedral," in 1935. A verse drama about the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket, the play's religious themes were forerunners of Eliot's four other major plays, "The Family Reunion" (1939), "The Cocktail Party" (1949), "The Confidential Clerk" (1953), and "The Elder Statesman" (1959). Religious verse dramas cloaked in secular conversational comedy, Eliot belied whatever pretensions his detractors may have found in his Anglophilia. He leapt ahead with this anti-pretension with "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats" (1939), a book of verse for children that was eventually adapted into the Broadway musical "Cats."

As one might expect from his work, Eliot was unhappy for most of his life, but his second marriage in 1957 proved fruitful. When he died in 1965, he was the recipient of a Nobel Prize (1948), the author of the century's most influential poem, and arguably the century's most important poet. Perhaps due to the large shadow he casts, relatively few poets have tried to ape his style; others simply find him cold. Still, no one can escape the authority of Eliot's Modernism—it is as relevant today as it was in 1922. While Eliot may not have as much influence on poets today as some of his contemporaries, he has had a far greater impact on poetry.

13.3.2 Introduction to the Text

"The Waste Land" caused a sensation when it was published in 1922. It is today the most widely translated and studied English-language poem of the twentieth century. This is perhaps surprising given the poem's length and its difficulty, but Eliot's vision of modern life as plagued by sordid impulses, widespread apathy, and pervasive soullessness packed a punch when readers first encountered it.

Text

I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

APRIL is the cruellest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Notes

Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.
    Frisch weht der Wind
    Der Heimat zu,
    Mein Irisch Kind,
    Wo weilest du?
"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
They called me the hyacinth girl."
—Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
Öd' und leer das Meer.

Notes

Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,
Had a bad cold, nevertheless
Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,
Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,
(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)
Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
The lady of situations.
Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.
I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.
Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,
Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:
One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.
There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying "Stetson!
You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!"

II. A GAME OF CHESS

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines

Notes

From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;
In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused
And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air
That freshened from the window, these ascended
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
Huge sea-wood fed with copper
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
In which sad light a carvèd dolphin swam.
Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
"Jug Jug" to dirty ears.
And other withered stumps of time
Were told upon the walls; staring forms
Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.
Footsteps shuffled on the stair,
Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
Spread out in fiery points
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

"My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.
What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
I never know what you are thinking. Think."

I think we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones.

Notes

"What is that noise?"
The wind under the door.
"What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"
Nothing again nothing.
"Do
You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
Nothing?"
I remember
Those are pearls that were his eyes.
"Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"
But
O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag
It's so elegant
So intelligent

"What shall I do now? What shall I do?
I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
With my hair down, so. What shall we do to-morrow?
What shall we ever do?"
The hot water at ten.
And if it rains, a closed car at four.
And we shall play a game of chess,
Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said,
I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you
To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.
And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,
He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,
And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.
Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said.
Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Notes

If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said,
Others can pick and choose if you can't.
But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling.
You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.
(And her only thirty-one.)
I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,
It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.
(She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)
The chemist said it would be alright, but I've never been the same.
You are a proper fool, I said.
Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,
What you get married for if you don't want children?
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,
And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.
Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.
Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

III. THE FIRE SERMON

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.
And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;
Departed, have left no addresses.
By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept…
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.
But at my back in a cold blast I hear
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

A rat crept softly through the vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank

Notes

While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse.
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him.
White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water
Et, O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!

Twit twit twit
Jug jug jug jug jug jug
So rudely forc'd.
Tereu

Unreal City
Under the brown fog of a winter noon
Mr Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
C. i. f. London: documents at sight,
Asked me in demotic French
To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
Followed by a week-end at the Metropole.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,
I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,
The typist home at tea-time, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
Out of the window perilously spread
Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,

Notes

On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.
I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—
I too awaited the expected guest.
He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,
A small house-agent's clerk, with one bold stare,
One of the low on whom assurance sits
As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.
The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.
(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
Enacted on this same divan or bed;
I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
And walked among the lowest of the dead.)
Bestows one final patronizing kiss,
And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit…

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
"Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."
When lovely woman stoops to folly and
Paces about her room again, alone,
She smoothes her hair with automatic hand,
And puts a record on the gramophone.

"This music crept by me upon the waters"
And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.
O City City, I can sometimes hear
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
The pleasant whining of a mandoline
And a clatter and a chatter from within
Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls

Notes

Of Magnus Martyr hold
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

The river sweats
Oil and tar
The barges drift
With the turning tide
Red sails
Wide
To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.
The barges wash
Drifting logs
Down Greenwich reach
Past the Isle of Dogs.
    Weialala leia
    Wallala leialala
Elizabeth and Leicester
Beating oars
The stern was formed
A gilded shell
Red and gold
The brisk swell
Rippled both shores
South-west wind
Carried down stream
The peal of bells
White towers
    Weialala leia
    Wallala leialala

"Trams and dusty trees.
Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew
Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees
Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe."

"My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart
Under my feet. After the event
He wept. He promised 'a new start.'
I made no comment. What should I resent?"
"On Margate Sands.

Notes

I can connect
Nothing with nothing.
The broken finger-nails of dirty hands.
My people humble people who expect
Nothing."

la la

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest

burning

IV. DEATH BY WATER

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep seas swell
And the profit and loss.
A current under sea
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.
Gentile or Jew
O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

After the torch-light red on sweaty faces
After the frosty silence in the gardens
After the agony in stony places
The shouting and the crying
Prison and place and reverberation
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience

Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains

Notes

Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mud-cracked houses
If there were water
And no rock
If there were rock
And also water
And water
A spring
A pool among the rock
If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
But there is no water

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
—But who is that on the other side of you?

What is that sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only

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What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal

A woman drew her long black hair out tight
And fiddled whisper music on those strings
And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
And upside down in air were towers
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.

In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
It has no windows, and the door swings,
Dry bones can harm no one.
Only a cock stood on the roof-tree
Co co rico co co rico
In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust
Bringing rain
Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
Then spoke the thunder
DA
Datta: what have we given?
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries
Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider
Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
In our empty rooms

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DA
Dayadhvam: I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
Only at nightfall, aetherial rumours
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus
DA
Damyata: The boat responded
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down

Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam ceu chelidon—O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie
These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih

"The Waste Land" is not quite the poem Eliot originally drafted. Eliot's close friend and colleague, Ezra Pound, significantly revised the poem, suggesting major cuts and compressions. Thanks to Pound's heavy editing, as well as suggestions (specifically about scenes relevant to their stormy, hostile marriage) from Haigh-Wood, "The Waste Land" defined Modernist poetry and became possibly the most influential poem of the century. Devoid of a single speaker's voice, the poem ceaselessly shifts its tone and form, instead grafting together numerous allusive voices from Eliot's substantial poetic repertoire; Dante shares the stage with nonsense sounds (a technique that also showcases Eliot's dry wit). Believing this style best represented the fragmentation of the modern world, Eliot focused on the sterility of modern culture and its lack of tradition and ritual.

Notes Despite this pessimistic viewpoint, many find its mythical, religious ending hopeful about humanity's chance for renewal.

Pound's influence on the final version of "The Waste Land" is significant. At the time of the poem's composition, Eliot was ill, struggling to recover from his nervous breakdown and languishing

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through an unhappy marriage. Pound offered him support and friendship; his belief in and admiration for Eliot were enormous. In turn, however, he radically trimmed Eliot's long first draft (nineteen pages, by some accounts), bringing the poem closer to its current version. This is not to say Eliot would not have revised the poem on his own in similar ways; rather, the two men seemed to have genuinely collaborated on molding what was already a loose and at times free-flowing work. Pound, like Eliot a crucible of modernism, called for compression, ellipsis, reduction. The poem grew yet more cryptic; references that were previously clear now became more obscure. Explanations were out the window. The result was a more difficult work—but arguably a richer one.

Eliot did not take all of Pound's notes, but he did follow his friend's advice enough to turn his sprawling work into a tight, elliptical, and fragmented piece. Once the poem was completed, Pound lobbied on its behalf, convincing others of its importance. He believed in Eliot's genius, and in the impact "The Waste Land" would have on the literature of its day. That impact ultimately stretched beyond poetry, to novels, painting, music, and all the other arts. John Dos Passos's Manhattan Transfer owes a significant debt to "The Waste Land," for example. Eliot's take on the modern world profoundly shaped future schools of thought and literature, and his 1922 poem remains a touchstone of the English-language canon.

13.4 T.S.Eliot: The Waste Land (Non-detailed): Discussion and Analysis

13.4.1 Section I: "The Burial of the Dead"

"The Waste Land" begins with an excerpt from Petronius Arbiter's Satyricon, in Latin and Greek, which translates as: "For once I saw with my own eyes the Cumean Sibyl hanging in a jar, and when the boys asked her, 'Sibyl, what do you want?' she answered, 'I want to die.'" The quotation is followed by a dedication to Ezra Pound, Eliot's colleague and friend, who played a major role in shaping the final version of the poem.

The poem proper begins with a description of the seasons. April emerges as the "cruellest" month, passing over a desolate land to which winter is far kinder. Eliot shifts from this vague invocation of time and nature to what seem to be more specific memories: a rain shower by the Starnbergersee; a lake outside Munich; coffee in that city's Hofgarten; sledding with a cousin in the days of childhood.

The second stanza returns to the tone of the opening lines, describing a land of "stony rubbish"–arid, sterile, devoid of life, quite simply the "waste land" of the poem's title. Eliot quotes Ezekiel 2.1 and Ecclesiastes 12.5, using biblical language to construct a sort of dialogue between the narrator—the "son of man"—and a higher power. The former is desperately searching for some sign of life—"roots that clutch," branches that grow—but all he can find are dry stones, dead trees, and "a heap of broken images." We have here a forsaken plane that offers no relief from the beating sun, and no trace of water.

Suddenly Eliot switches to German, quoting directly from Wagner's Tristan und Isolde. The passage translates as: "Fresh blows the wind / To the homeland / My Irish child / Where do you wait?" In Wagner's opera, Isolde, on her way to Ireland, overhears a sailor singing this song, which brings with it ruminations of love promised and of a future of possibilities. After this digression, Eliot offers the reader a snatch of speech, this time from the mouth of the "hyacinth girl." This girl, perhaps one of the narrator's (or Eliot's) early loves, alludes to a time a year ago when the narrator presented her with hyacinths. The narrator, for his part, describes in another personal account—distinct in tone, that is, from the more grandiloquent descriptions of the waste land, the seasons, and intimations of spirituality that have preceded it—coming back late from a hyacinth garden and feeling struck by a sense of emptiness. Looking upon the beloved girl, he "knew nothing"; that is to say, faced with love, beauty, and "the heart of light," he saw only "silence." At this point, Eliot returns to Wagner, with the line "Oed' und leer das Meer": "Desolate and empty is the sea." Also

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plucked from Tristan und Isolde, the line belongs to a watchman, who tells the dying Tristan that Isolde's ship is nowhere to be seen on the horizon.

From here Eliot switches abruptly to a more prosaic mode, introducing Madame Sosostris, a "famous clairvoyante" alluded to in Aldous Huxley's Crome Yellow. This fortune-teller is known across Europe for her skills with Tarot cards. The narrator remembers meeting her when she had "a bad cold." At that meeting she displayed to him the card of the drowned Phoenician Sailor: "Here, said she, is your card." Next comes "Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks," and then "the man with three staves," "the Wheel," and "the one-eyed merchant." It should be noted that only the man with three staves and the wheel are actual Tarot cards; Belladonna is often associated with da Vinci's "Madonna of the Rocks," and the one-eyed merchant is, as far as we can tell, an invention of Eliot's.

Finally, Sosostris encounters a blank card representing something the one-eyed merchant is carrying on his back–something she is apparently "forbidden to see." She is likewise unable to find the Hanged Man among the cards she displays; from this she concludes that the narrator should "fear death by water." Sosostris also sees a vision of a mass of people "walking round in a ring." Her meeting with the narrator concludes with a hasty bit of business: she asks him to tell Mrs. Equitone, if he sees her, that Sosostris will bring the horoscope herself.

The final stanza of this first section of "The Waste Land" begins with the image of an "Unreal City" echoing Baudelaire's "fourmillante cite," in which a crowd of people—perhaps the same crowd Sosostris witnessed—flows over London Bridge while a "brown fog" hangs like a wintry cloud over the proceedings. Eliot twice quotes Dante in describing this phantasmagoric scene: "I had not thought death had undone so many" (from Canto 3 of the Inferno); "Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled" (from Canto 4). The first quote refers to the area just inside the Gates of Hell; the second refers to Limbo, the first circle of Hell.

It seems that the denizens of modern London remind Eliot of those without any blame or praise who are relegated to the Gates of Hell, and those who where never baptized and who now dwell in Limbo, in Dante's famous vision. Each member of the crowd keeps his eyes on his feet; the mass of men flow up a hill and down King William Street, in the financial district of London, winding up beside the Church of Saint Mary Woolnoth. The narrator sees a man he recognizes named Stetson. He cries out to him, and it appears that the two men fought together in a war. Logic would suggest World War I, but the narrator refers to Mylae, a battle that took place during the First Punic War. He then asks Stetson whether the corpse he planted last year in his garden has begun to sprout. Finally, Eliot quotes Webster and Baudelaire, back to back, ending the address to Stetson in French: "hypocrite lecteur!–mon semblable,–mon frère!"

Analysis

Eliot's opening quotation sets the tone for the poem as a whole. Sibyl is a mythological figure who asked Apollo "for as many years of life as there are grains in a handful of sand" (North, 3). Unfortunately, she did not think to ask for everlasting youth. As a result, she is doomed to decay for years and years, and preserves herself within a jar. Having asked for something akin to eternal life, she finds that what she most wants is death. Death alone offers escape; death alone promises the end, and therefore a new beginning.

Thus does Eliot begin his magisterial poem, labeling his first section "The Burial of the Dead," a title pulled from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. He has been careful to lay out his central theme before the first stanza has even begun: death and life are easily blurred; from death can spring life, and life in turn necessitates death. Cleanth Brooks, Jr., in "The Waste Land: An Analysis," sees the poem's engine as a paradox: "Life devoid of meaning is death; sacrifice, even the sacrificial death, may be life-giving, an awaking to life." Eliot's vision is of a decrepit land inhabited by persons who languish in an in-between state, perhaps akin to that of Dante's Limbo: they live, but insofar as they seem to feel nothing and aspire to nothing, they are dead. Eliot once articulated his philosophy

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concerning these matters in a piece of criticism on Baudelaire, one of his chief poetic influences: in it, Eliot intimated that it may be better to do evil than to do nothing at all—that at least some form of action means that one exists.

This criterion for existence, perhaps an antecedent to Existentialism, holds action as inherently meaningful. Inaction is equated with waste. The key image in "The Waste Land" may then be Sosostris's vision of "crowds of people, walking round in a ring." They walk and walk, but go nowhere. Likewise, the inhabitants of modern London keep their eyes fixed to their feet; their destination matters little to them and they flow as an unthinking mass, bedecking the metropolis in apathy.

From this thicket of malaise, the narrator clings to memories that would seem to suggest life in all its vibrancy and wonder: summer rain in Munich, coffee in a German park, a girl wearing flowers. What is crucial to the poem's sensibility, however, is the recognition that even these trips to the past, even these attempts to regain happiness, must end in failure or confusion. Identities are in flux. The Hofgarten memory precipitates a flurry of German: "Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch." Translated, this line reads roughly as: "I'm not Russian at all; I come from Lithuania, a true German." It is not clear who the speaker is, but whatever the case the line is nonsensical; three distinct regions of Europe are mentioned, though Lithuania arguably has far more to do with Russia than with Germany. The sentence itself depends on a non sequitur, anticipating by almost a century Europe's current crisis of identity, with individual nations slowly losing ground to a collective union. In Eliot's time, that continent was just emerging from the wreckage of World War I, a splintered entity teetering on chaos; Germany, in particular, suffered from a severe identity dilemma, with various factions competing for authority, classes that were distrustful of one another, and the old breed of military strong-men itching to renew itself for the blood-drenched decades to come.

The historical considerations will only go so far. Biographical interpretation is a slippery slope, but it should nonetheless be noted that Eliot was, at the time of the poem's composition, suffering from acute nervous ailments, chief among them severe anxiety. It was during his time of recuperation that he was able to write much of "The Waste Land," but his conflicted feelings about his wife, Vivienne, did not much help his state of mind. The ambiguity of love, the potential of that emotion to cause both great joy and great sorrow, informs the passage involving the hyacinth girl–another failed memory, as it were. In this case, Eliot describes a vision of youthful beauty in a piece of writing that seems at first to stem more from English Romanticism than from the arid modern world of the rest of the poem: "Your arms full, and your hair wet." Water, so cherished an element and so lacking in this desolate wasteland, here brings forth flowers and hyacinth girls, and the possibility of happiness, however fleeting. That very vision, however, causes Eliot's eyes to fail, his speech to forsake him; love renders him impotent, and he is left "neither living nor dead" – much like the aforementioned residents of Limbo. The paradox is that such joy and human warmth might elicit such pain and coldness. Eliot sums it up with the line: "Looking into the heart of light, the silence." Using Wagner's Tristan und Isolde as a book-end device—the first such quotation alluding to the beginnings of love, the second describing the tragedy of a love lost—Eliot traces a swift passage from light to darkness, sound to silence, movement to stasis. (Tristan begins on a boat, with the wind freshly blowing, and ends on the shoreline, awaiting a boat that never comes.)

The same paradox is there at the very beginning of the poem: April is the cruelest month. Shouldn't it be the kindest? The lovely image of lilacs in the spring is here associated with "the dead land." Winter was better; then, at least, the suffering was obvious, and the "forgetful snow" covered over any memories. In spring, "memory and desire" mix; the poet becomes acutely aware of what he is missing, of what he has lost, of what has passed him by. Ignorance is bliss; the knowledge that better things are possible is perhaps the most painful thing of all. Eliot's vision of modern life is therefore rooted in a conception of the lost ideal.

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It is appropriate, then, that the narrator should turn next to a clairvoyant; after gazing upon the past, he now seeks to into the future. Water, giver of life, becomes a token of death: the narrator is none other than the drowned Phoenician Sailor, and he must "fear death by water." This realization paves the way for the famous London Bridge image. Eliot does not even describe the water of the Thames; he saves his verse for the fog that floats overhead, for the quality of the dawn-lit sky, and for the faceless mass of men swarming through the dead city. Borrowing heavily from Baudelaire's visions of Paris, Eliot paints a portrait of London as a haunted (or haunting) specter, where the only sound is "dead" and no man dares even look beyond the confines of his feet. When the narrator sees Stetson, we return to the prospect of history. World War I is replaced by the Punic War; with this odd choice, Eliot seems to be arguing that all wars are the same, just as he suggests that all men are the same in the stanza's final line: "You! hypocrite lecteur!–mon semblable,–mon frère!": "Hypocrite reader!–my likeness,–my brother!" We are all Stetson; Eliot is speaking directly to us. Individual faces blur into the ill-defined mass of humanity as the burial procession inexorably proceeds.

13.4.2 Section II: "A Game of Chess"

The second section of "The Waste Land" begins with a description of a woman sitting on a beautiful chair that looks "like a burnished throne"—a nod to Cleopatra in Antony and Cleopatra. She occupies a splendid drawing room, replete with coffered ceilings and lavish decorations. The setting is a decidedly grandiose one. We are not sure who the woman is: perhaps Eliot's wife Vivienne, perhaps a stand-in for all members of the upper crust, perhaps simply an unnamed personage whiling away the hours in a candlelit kingdom. Eliot writes of "satin cases poured forth in profusion," "vials of ivory and coloured glass," an "antique mantel" and "the glitter of […] jewels." Both the woman and the room are magnificently attired, perhaps to the point of excess.

One of the paintings in the room depicts the rape of Philomela, a scene pulled from Ovid's Metamorphoses. In the original story, King Tereus's wife bids him to bring her sister Philomela to her. Upon meeting Philomela, Tereus falls instantly and hopelessly in love; nothing must get in the way of his conquest. Racked with lust, he steals away with her and rapes her in the woods—the "sylvan scene" Eliot mentions. He then ties her up and cuts off her tongue so that she may not tell others of what has happened. He returns to his wife, but Philomela is able to weave on a loom what has befallen her; she gives the loom to her sister, who, upon discovering the truth, retrieves Philomela, slays Tereus's son, and feeds his carcass to the king. When he finds out that he has been served his son for dinner, Tereus flies into a rage, chasing both Philomela and his wife out of the palace, and all three of them transform into birds. The speechless Philomela becomes a nightingale.

Snatches of dialogue follow. It seems plausible that the woman in the room is addressing the narrator. She complains that her nerves are bad, and requests that he stay with her. When she asks him what he is thinking, the narrator retorts, "I think we are in rats' alley / Where the dead men lost their bones." Still more harried questions follow; the woman demands to find out whether the narrator knows "nothing," then asks what she should do now, what they should do tomorrow. The narrator answers with a rote itinerary: "The hot water at ten. / And if it rains, a closed car at four. / And we shall play a game of chess, / Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door."

The last stanza of the section depicts two Cockney women talking in a pub at closing time – hence the repeated dictum: "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME." The subject of conversation is a certain Lil, whose husband Albert was recently released from the army after the war. He gave Lil money to get a new set of teeth, but she has hesitated: "You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique [...] I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face." Lil is apparently on pills, unhappy in her marriage, and mother to none. The dialogue grows more fractured and the closing time announcements become more frequent, and finally the stanza devolves into a quotation from Hamlet: Ophelia's final words to Claudius and Gertrude, "Good night ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night."

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Analysis

This section once again ushers in the issue of biographical interpretation. It is tempting to read the woman on the "burnished throne" as Eliot's wife, Vivienne; the passage then becomes a dissection of an estranged relationship. Some of the details point to failed romance or failed marriage: the "golden Cupidon" who must hide "his eyes behind his wing," the depiction of Philomela's rape—an example of love cascading into brutality and violence—and even the woman's "strange synthetic perfumes" drowning "the sense in odours."

Again the word "drowned" appears, and with it comes the specter of death by water. In this case, the thick perfumes seem to blot out authentic sensations, just as the splendid decorations of the room appear at times more menacing than beautiful. The trappings of a wealthy modern life come at a price. The carving of a dolphin is cast in a "sad light." The grandiose portraits and paintings on the wall are but "withered stumps of time." By the end of this first stanza, the room seems almost haunted: "staring forms/Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed." The woman, for her part, is a glittering apparition, seated upon her Chair (Eliot capitalizes the word as if it were a kingdom) like a queen, recalling Cleopatra—and thus yet another failed love affair.

First Tristan and Isolde, now Cleopatra: twice now Eliot has alluded to tragic romances, filtered from antiquity through more modern sensibilities—first that of Wagner, the great modernizer of opera, and then that of Shakespeare, perhaps the first "modern" dramatist. Quotation and allusion is of course a quintessential component of Eliot's style, particularly in "The Waste Land"; the poem is sometimes criticized for being too heavily bedecked in references, and too dependent on previous works and canons. The poet's trick is to plumb the old in order to find the new. It may seem at first ironic that he relies so much on Ovid, the Bible, Dante, and other older works of literature to describe the modern age, but Eliot's method is an essentially universalist one. Just as the Punic War is interchangeable with World War I—the truly "modern" war of Eliot's time—so can past generations of writers and thinkers shed light on contemporary life. Eliot's greatest model in this vein was probably Ulysses, in which James Joyce used Homer's epic as a launching pad for a dissection of modern Dublin. In contrast to modernist poets such as Cendrars and Appollinaire, who used the choot-choot of trains, the spinning of wheels, and the billowing of fumes to evoke their era, or philosophers such as Kracauer and Benjamin, who dove into the sports shows and the arcade halls in search of a lexicon of the modern that is itself modern, Eliot is content to tease modernity out of the old.

This is not to say that "The Waste Land" is free of the specifics of 1920s life, but rather that every such specific comes weighted with an antiquarian reference. When Eliot evokes dance-hall numbers and popular ditties, he does so through the "Shakespeherian Rag." When he imitates the Cockney talk of women in a pub, he finishes the dialogue with a quotation from Hamlet, so that the rhythms of lower-class London speech give way to the words of the mad Ophelia.

That said, "A Game of Chess" is considerably less riddled with allusion and quotes than "The Burial of the Dead." The name itself comes from Thomas Middleton's seventeenth-century play A Game of Chess, which posited the said game as an allegory to describe historical machinations—specifically the brewing conflict between England and Spain. What might the game allegorize for Eliot? He offers it up as one of several activities, when the woman demands: "What shall we ever do?" Simply a slot in a strict numerical ordering of the day, chess recalls "lidless eyes," as its players bide the time and wait "for a knock upon the door." We are not far removed from the masses crowding London Bridge, their eyes fixed on their feet. Modern city-dwellers who float along in a fog are neither dead nor living; their world is an echo of Dante's Limbo. Chess belongs therefore to this lifeless life; it is the quintessential game of the wasteland, dependent on numbers and cold strategies, devoid of feeling or human contact. Interaction is reduced to a set of movements on a checkered board.

13.4.3 Section III: "The Fire Sermon"

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Eliot opens this section with the image of a river, wind crossing silently overhead. We are on the banks of the Thames, and Eliot cites Spenser's "Prothalamion" with the line: "Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song." The river is empty; "the nymphs" of Spenser's poem have departed, as have "their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors." Eliot unspools imagery that evokes modern life–"empty bottles, sandwich papers,/Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends"–by describing what is not in the river. In other words, the Thames has become a kind of stagnant slate, devoid of detritus but also of life. The narrator remembers sitting by "the waters of Leman"—French for Lake Geneva, where the poet recuperated while writing "The Waste Land"—and weeping. His tears are a reference to Psalm 137, in which the people of Israel, exiled to Babylon, cry by the river as they remember Jerusalem.

Suddenly the death-life of the modern world rears its head. "A cold blast" is sounded, bones rattle, and a rat creeps "through the vegetation/Dragging its slimy belly on the bank." Rats appear several times in "The Waste Land," and always they carry with them the specter of urban decay and death—a death which, unlike that of Christ or Osiris or other men-deities, brings about no life. At this point, the narrator, "fishing in the dull canal," assumes the role of the Fisher King, alluding to Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual to Romance and its description of the Grail legend. According to this study, of critical importance to the entirety of "The Waste Land," the Fisher King—so named probably because of the importance of fish as Christian fertility symbols—grows ill or impotent. As a result, his land begins to wither away; something akin to a drought hits, and what was once a fruitful kingdom is reduced to a wasteland. Only the Holy Grail can reverse the spell and save the king and his land. A typical addendum to this legend involves a prior crime or violation that serves as cause for the Fisher King's malady. By association, the rape of a maiden might sometimes lie at the root; hence Eliot's allusion to the tale of Philomela in "A Game of Chess."

The allusion to the Grail is doubled by a possible reference to Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival, a version of the Percival stories; in this account, the brother of the Fisher King (Anfortas) tells Parzival: "His name all men know as Anfortas, and I weep for him evermore." Eliot's lines "Musing upon the king my brother's wreck/And on the king my father's death before him" seem to combine the Percival legend with The Tempest, in which Ferdinand utters the verse: "Sitting on a bank, / Weeping again the King my father's wreck." (North, 11) Eliot has already twice quoted The Tempest–"Those are pearls that were his eyes," in "The Burial of the Dead" and "A Game of Chess"—and here he links Shakespeare's fantastical drama, and the accompanying image of water racked by turbulent weather, with Grail mythology.

As the impotent Fisher King, Eliot describes the wasteland that stretches out before him. "White bodies [lie] naked on the low damp ground," and bones are scattered "in a little dry garret, / Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year." This last line echoes verses 115-116 in "A Game of Chess": "I think we are in the rats' alley/Where the dead men have lost their bones." In both cases, the setting is one of death, decay, a kind of modern hell. Eliot proceeds to allude to John Day's The Parliament of Bees, a seventeenth-century work that describes the tale of Actaeon and Diana: the former approaches the latter while she is bathing, and, surprising her, is transformed into a stag and killed by his own dogs. Here Actaeon is "Sweeney"—a character familiar from some of Eliot's other poems, and Diana is Mrs. Porter. It is springtime, suggesting love and fertility—but also cruelty, in Eliot's version—and Sweeney visits the object of his affection via "horns and motors." Again ancient mythology is updated, recast, and remolded. The stanza concludes with a quotation from Verlaine's "Parsifal," a sonnet describing the hero's successful quest for the Holy Grail.

Next come four bizarre lines: "Twit twit twit/Jug jug jug jug jug jug/So rudely forc'd./Tereu." We recall "Jug jug jug" from "A Game of Chess," in which the onomatopoeia described the sound of Philomela as nightingale; "Twit twit twit" likewise seems to represent a bird's call. So we have returned to the tale of the woman who was violated and took her revenge, and "So rudely forc'd" refers to that violation. "Tereu," then, is Tereus.

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"Unreal City" reprises the line from "The Burial of the Dead," evoking Baudelaire once more and bringing the reader back to modern London. Mr. Eugenides, a merchant from Turkey (and probably the one-eyed merchant Madame Sosostris described earlier) invites the narrator to luncheon at a hotel and to join him on a weekend excursion to Brighton. In the stanza that follows, the narrator, no longer himself and no longer the Fisher King, takes on the role of Tiresias, the blind prophet who has lived both as a man and a woman, and is therefore "throbbing between two lives." Tiresias sees a "young man carbuncular"—that is, a young man who has or resembles a boil—pay a visit to a female typist. She is "bored and tired," and the young man, like Tereus, is full of lust. He sleeps with her and then makes off, leaving her alone to think to herself: "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over." She plays music on the gramophone.

The music seems to transport the narrator back to the city below. "This music crept by me upon the waters" is another quote from The Tempest, and Eliot proceeds to describe a bustling bar in Lower Thames Street filled with "fishmen." This account paves the way for another vision of the river itself: sweating "oil and tar," a murky, polluted body replete with barges and "drifting logs." Eliot quotes Wagner's Die Gotterdammerung, in which maidens upon the Rhine, having lost their gold, sing a song of lament: "Weialala leia / Wallala leialala." A quick allusion to Queen Elizabeth's boat-ride with her suitor the Earl of Leicester, described in James Anthony Froude's History of England, contains references to the rich woman of "A Game of Chess" ("A gilded shell") and another description of the sounds of the city—"The peal of bells / White towers."

Finally, one of the "maidens" raises her own voice, recounting her proper tragedy. "Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew/Undid me": in other words, she was born in Highbury and lost her innocence in Richmond and Kew. Bitterly she recalls how the man responsible promised "a new start" afterwards; as it now stands, the maiden "can connect / Nothing with nothing." The stanza ends with references to St. Augustine's Confessions and Buddha's Fire Sermon—in each case to a passage describing the dangers of youthful lust.

Analysis

The central theme of this section is, to put it simply, sex. If death permeates "The Burial of the Dead" and the tragically wronged woman—be it Philomela or Ophelia—casts a pall over "A Game of Chess," "The Fire Sermon" is in essence a sermon about the dangers of lust. It is important to recognize that Eliot culminates this passage with an invocation of both Eastern and Western philosophy; he even says so himself in his notes. "To Carthage then I came" refers to Augustine; "Burning burning burning burning" recalls Buddha's Fire Sermon, in which "All things, O priests, are on fire." Both Augustine and Buddha warn against purely physical urges, as they must inevitably serve as obstacles or barriers to true faith and spiritual peace. The image of fire, familiar from countless representations of Hell in Christian art, is here specifically linked to the animal drives that push men and women to commit sinful acts.

Of course, to interpret Eliot's poetry this moralistically is to miss much of its nuance and wit. While recalling the strictest of religious codes, Eliot is at his most literately playful here, spinning Tempest quotations into odes to Wagner, littering Spenser's Thames with "cardboard boxes" and "cigarette ends," replacing Actaeon and Diana with a certain Sweeney and a certain Mrs. Porter. There is a satirical edge that cuts through this writing -– and perhaps real indignation as well. Much has already been made of the episode involving the typist and the carbuncular man. What is particularly fascinating about it is the way in which Eliot mixes and matches the violent with the nearly tender: the young man's first advances are "caresses" and he is later described as a "lover." At the same time, however, "he assaults at once," his vanity requiring "no response." It is close to a scene of rape, and the ambiguity makes it all the more troubling.

Eliot offers a voyeuristic glimpse of a young woman's home, her sexual liaison with a man, and her moments alone afterwards. Ironically, he presents this Peeping Tom's account from the narrative perspective of the blind Tiresias: the "Old man with wrinkled female breasts." The decrepit prophet

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who once lived as a woman recalls his encounters with Antigone and Oedipus Rex ("I who have sat by Thebes below the wall") and Odysseus in Hades ("And walked among the lowest of the dead") while witnessing a quintessentially modern bit of business. That Eliot resurrects ancient tropes and characters within such a vulgar scene is an act of audacity that was shocking in 1922, and still packs a punch. Readers today are perhaps less surprised by the episode, but it is hard not to be moved; quoting from Oliver Goldsmith's eighteenth-century novel The Vicar of Wakefield, Eliot describes the post-coital woman pacing about her room: "When lovely woman stoops to folly." An image of potential perfection has been spoiled; all that is left now is a mirror and a gramophone.

It was surely this kind of scene that so stirred John Dos Passos, and it does indeed find numerous echoes in Manhattan Transfer. Eliot's poem was a crucial inspiration for Dos Passos' epic portrait of New York. An American transplanted to Europe, Eliot's narrator floats through London in "The Fire Sermon," beginning by the Thames and returning there to listen to the cry of the Rhine-maidens as they bemoan their fate: "Weialala leia/Wallala leialala." Whether quoting older sources or capturing the rhyme and texture of modern life, Eliot is dealing in sadness; a sense of loss imbues the writing, bubbling to the surface in the maiden's account of her lost innocence. Just as the narrator "knew nothing" when looking upon the hyacinth girl, so is the maiden faced with "nothing": "I can connect/Nothing with nothing./The broken fingernails of dirty hands./My people humble people who expect/Nothing."

From the typist to this last suffering woman, lust seems to portend sorrow, and that sorrow seems in turn to be an integral feature of the modern world. The typist is never named because she is ultimately a "type," a representation of something larger and more widespread. Eliot is diagnosing his London and his world with a disease of the senses, through which sex has replaced love and meaningless physical contact has subsumed real emotional connection. Ironically, the Fisher King's impotence then results from an excess of carnality. The image of the river sweating oil recalls a Biblical plague, and the "burning" at the end of the section brings Hell to mind. Through it all the river courses, carrying history along with it. All the poet can do, it seems, is weep.

13.4.4 Section IV: "Death by Water" and "What the Thunder Said"

"Death by Water" is by far the shortest of the poem's five sections, describing in eight lines "Phlebas the Phoenician" lying dead in the sea. An echo of the "drowned Phoenician" Madame Sosostris displayed in "The Burial of the Dead," Phlebas is apparently a merchant, judging by the reference to "the profit and loss." Now "a current under sea" picks his bones.

"What the Thunder Said," the final section of "The Waste Land," picks up the same thread, referring in the first stanza to the passion of Christ, another famous deceased. The "torchlight red on sweaty faces" perhaps indicates the guards who come to take Christ away; the "garden" is Gethsemane; "the agony in stony places" refers to the torture and the execution itself; and "of thunder of spring over distant mountains" describes the earthquake following the crucifixion. From Christ's death springs life; similarly, the Phoenician is killed by water, that life-giving force, that symbol of fertility and rebirth. As in "The Burial of the Dead," life and death are inextricably linked, their borders blurred at times: "He who was living is now dead/We who were living are now dying/With a little patience."

The second stanza describes a land without any water: only rocks, sand, "Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth." The thunder brings no rain and is therefore "sterile." "Red sullen faces sneer and snarl" at the poet as he makes his way through this desolate land – another wasteland.

Did u know? The poet laments the absence of water, thirst imbuing his verse with longing; he imagines the "drip drop" of water on rocks, but concludes by acknowledging that, alas, "there is no water."

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What follows is an allusion to Luke 24, as well as to a passage in Sir Ernest Shackleton's South; two travelers walk upon a road, and seem to be accompanied by a third, unnamed wanderer. Does this "third" exist, or is he merely an illusion? Shackleton's passage involves three men imagining a fourth by their side; in the Biblical scene, two travelers are joined by the resurrected Christ, but do not at first recognize that it is Him.

Eliot then moves from the individual to the collective, casting his gaze over all Europe and Asia, seeing "endless plains" and "hooded hordes." It is a nearly apocalyptic vision; the great ancient cities of the Mediterranean ("Jerusalem Athens Alexandria") and Europe ("Vienna London") all seem "unreal," as if they were already phantoms. Eliot refers to the "violet air," echoing the "violet hour" of "The Fire Sermon," but also suggesting the twilight not just of a day, but of all Western civilization. "Violet" is one of the liturgical colors associated with baptism; Eliot might be alluding to the Perilous Chapel in Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual to Romance, through which the knight must pass in order to obtain the Grail and which represents a sort of liminal passage or baptism. Certainly the next stanza, with "voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells" and "bats with baby faces," suggests the Perilous Chapel –- a nightmarish place that tests the knight's gall and instills dread. Eliot describes towers that are upside down, and a woman who plays music with her hair, recalling the rich woman in "A Game of Chess" whose "hair / Spread out in fiery points / Glowed into words," and "tumbled graves." (In some versions of the Grail legend there is likewise a perilous graveyard.)

Finally, a "damp gust" brings rain. Immediately Eliot invokes the Ganges, India's sacred river ("Ganga" in the poem), and thunder, once sterile, now speaks: "Datta," "dayadhvam," and "damyata." The words the thunder offers belong to the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, and describe the three dictums God delivers to his disciples: "to give," "to control," and "to sympathize." This profoundly spiritual moment of communication between men and God, of a dialogue between the earth and the Heavens, seems to promise a new beginning. Civilization is crumbling—"London bridge is falling down falling down falling down"—yet the poem ends with a benediction: "Shantih shantih shantih."

Analysis

The final stanzas of "The Waste Land" once again link Western and Eastern traditions, transporting the reader to the Ganges and the Himalayas, and then returning to the Thames and London Bridge. Eliot's tactic throughout his poem has been that of eclecticism, of mixing and matching and of diversity, and here this strain reaches a culmination. The relevant Upanishad passage, which Eliot quotes, describes God delivering three groups of followers—men, demons, and the gods—the sound "Da." The challenge is to pull some meaning out of this apparently meaningless syllable. For men, "Da" becomes "Datta," meaning to give; this order is meant to curb man's greed. For demons, "dayadhvam" is the dictum: these cruel and sadistic beings must show compassion and empathy for others. Finally, the gods must learn control–"damyata"–for they are wild and rebellious. Together, these three orders add up to a consistent moral perspective, composure, generosity, and empathy lying at the core.

Recalling his earlier allusion to Buddha's Fire Sermon, Eliot links "Datta" with a description of lust, of the dangers of "a moment's surrender / Which an age of prudence can never retract." This, it would seem, is the primary sin of man. Crucially, however, Eliot notes that "By this, and this only, we have existed"—reminding the reader of his work on Baudelaire, and his argument that an evil action, because it signifies existence, is better than inaction, which signifies nothing. Man's lustful deeds are "not to be found in our obituaries"; they remain intangible to some degree, not to be committed to paper or memory. But they linger on nonetheless, haunting the doers but also imbuing them with a sense of self; for once, Eliot almost seems to suggest the value of "a moment's surrender,"

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of giving up control for one fleeting instant, no matter the consequences. Indeed, such an act is perhaps preferable to that which the "beneficent spider"—a reference to Webster's The White Devil, according to Eliot's notes—allows; "empty rooms" and a "lean solicitor" cannot hope to understand the impulses that lead to an act of "folly." Is "an age of prudence" even worth the trouble?

Next comes sympathy—"dayadvham"—as if Eliot were reminding the reader to show compassion for lustful men and women. We cannot help but remember the grief-stricken maiden of "The Fire Sermon" or the lonely typist with her gramophone; at the root of such tragedy is, after all, a sincere love for humanity. Eliot cares for these characters he has created, these refractions of his own modern world. The sermonizing of previous stanzas here gives way to a gentler view, albeit in the form of spiritual commandments. "I have heard the key/Turn in the door once and turn once only" refers to Dante's Inferno, in which Count Ugolino starves to death after being locked in a tower for treason. The subsequent allusion to "Coriolanus" completes the cycle: a Roman who turned his back on Rome, Coriolanus is another example of an outcast. These distinctly male visions of loneliness and removal echo the female counterpart of the typist, alone in her room at night. Eliot asks us to sympathize with these figures, and to acknowledge their pain.

The following stanza lifts the spirits; after the wreckage of lust and the torment of isolation, "Damyata" invites a happier perspective. The boat responds "Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar," like the boat upon which Isolde hears the sailor's song in "The Burial of the Dead." We have returned then to the beginnings of love, the promise of a joyful future. "Your heart" is perhaps even an address to Eliot's wife, begging the question of whether their romance might be rekindled. It is worth noting the tense Eliot employs: "would have responded" implies a negative. It is possible that what we are seeing is merely a token of what might have been, and not what is.

More direct is the past tense the narrator uses in the next stanza, in which he sits upon the shore, fishing. He is once again the Fisher King, impotent and dying, and he is flanked by an "arid plain." We are unable to fully escape the wasteland. Eliot tempers the hope of the previous lines with this evocation of despair. "Shall I at least set my lands in order?" the narrator asks. The end is drawing near. The world is collapsing: London Bridge falls, Dante is quoted yet again, and an excerpt from Nerval involving "Le Prince d'Aquitaine" points to a crumbling or destroyed tower—"la tour abolie." The hellish imagery of earlier parts of the poem returns here, complete with another view of modern-day London, with its towers and bridges. The word "ruins" is of particular importance: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins." The narrator is still attempting to stave off destruction...or perhaps he has at last surrendered, accepting his fate and that of the world.

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

6. Which month is the "Cruellest"?
   (a) September (b) December
   (c) April (d) May
7. Where is the Starnbergersee?
   (a) Just outside London (b) In Michigan
   (c) In Paris (d) Near Munich
8. "The river sweats....
   (a) oil and tar." (b) fumes and fire."
   (c) saffron and lilac." (d) water."
9. Who is demobbed?
   (a) Madame Sosostris (b) Sweeney
   (c) Prufrock (d) Lil's husband

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10. "Demobbed" means:
    (a) "killed" (b) "lynched"
    (c) "awarded with a medal of honor" (d) "released from the army"
11. What battle did Stetson supposedly participate in?
    (a) the Battle of Britain (b) the Battle of the Bulge
    (c) Mylae (d) Waterloo
12. Which of the following cities is mentioned in "The Waste Land"?
    (a) Vienna (b) Marseilles
    (c) Novgorod (d) Timbuktu
13. The opening section of "The Waste Land" is entitled:
    (a) "The Burial of the Dead" (b) "Death by Water"
    (c) "The Fire Sermon" (d) "Shantih"
14. Who visits the typist?
    (a) Mrs. Porter (b) Prufrock
    (c) The young man carbuncular (d) A fradford Millionaire
15. Who witnesses the visit?
    (a) Ezra Pound (b) Madame Sosostris
    (c) Tiresias (d) Vivienne

"Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe" is a reference to Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedie, a late sixteenth-century text in which Hieronymo lapses into insanity after his son is murdered. The brutality and violence of man come to mind. What became of control, sympathy, and generosity? As if to answer the question, Eliot repeats the Eastern dictum: "Datta. Dayadvham. Damyata." Against the ills of the modern (and pre-modern) world, those three words still hold out the promise of salvation. "Shantih shantih shantih" is an acknowledgment of that salvation; it may be interpreted as a blessing of sorts, putting to rest the sins, faults, trials and tribulations that have preceded it. Redemption remains a possibility. Interpretations of "The Waste Land" as unrelentingly pessimistic do little justice to the hopefulness, however faltering, of these last lines. Rain has come, and with it a call from the heavens. The poem ends on a note of grace, allying Eastern and Western religious traditions to posit a more universal worldview. Eliot calls what he has assembled "fragments," and indeed they are; but together they add up to a vision that is not only European but global, a vision of the world as wasteland, awaiting the arrival of the Grail that will cure it of its ills. The end of the poem seems to suggest that that Grail is still within reach.

13.5 Summary

- Edward James Hughes OM (17 August 1930 – 28 October 1998), more commonly known as Ted Hughes, was an English poet and children's writer.
- In 2008 The Times ranked Hughes fourth on their list of "The 50 greatest British writerssince 1945".
- Hughes' earlier poetic work is rooted in nature and, in particular, the innocent savagery of animals, and an interest from an early age.
- In Hughes's view, modern man has discarded his world of feelings, imagination and pure instincts which is true to nature.
- "Death by Water" is by far the shortest of the poem's five sections, describing in eight lines "Phlebas the Phoenician" lying dead in the sea.

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13.6 Keywords

The Waste Land : The Waste Land is a 434-line modernist poem by T. S. Eliot published in 1922.

Poetry : Poetry is a form of literary art in which language is used for its aesthetic and evocative qualities in addition to, or in lieu of, its apparent meaning.

Cathedral : Cathedral is a Christian church, which contains the seat of Bishop.

Enantiodromic : Enantiodromic refers to characteristic of something which has become its opposite.

Amorphousness : Amorphousness refers to state of lacking definite form.

13.7 Review Questions

1. Write an essay on the biography of Ted Hughes.
2. Describe the detailed analysis of the poem, "The Thought Fox".
3. Describe the analysis of the poem, "Thrushes".
4. Write an essay the biography of T.S. Eliot.
5. Explain the detailed analysis of Eliot's "The Waste Land".
6. Discuss Ted Hughes as an Animal Poet.

Answers: Self Assessment

1.	(b)	2. (d)	3. (c)	4. (a)	5. (c)
6.	(c)	7. (d)	8. (a)	9. (d)	10. (d)
11.	(c)	12. (a)	13. (a)	14. (c)	15. (c)

13.8 Further Readings

Books

Ted Hughes: the Life of a poet — Elaine Feinstein

Ted Hughes: poems — Ted Hughes

T.S.Eliot: the poems — Martin Scofield

The Waste Land — T.S. Eliot

Online links

http://www.enotes.com/thought-fox-salem/thought-fox-681298

http://www.pinkmonkey.com/booknotes/monkeynotes/pmWasteland02.asp