Manonmaniam Sundaranar University

DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE AND CONTINUING EDUCATION
TIRUNELVELI - 627 012, TAMILNADU

B.A ENGLISH (FIRST SEMESTER)

British Poetry

(From the Academic Year 2021 - 2022)

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BRITISH POETRY

Objectives:

- To help the students understand the aspects, chronology, sub-genres and movements of British Poetry.
- To make the students learn about the literary movements and trends they represent in literary history.

Course Outcomes:

C.O. No.	Upon the completion of this course, students will beable to	PSOs Addressed	Cognitive Level
CO 1	Recognize the various characteristics and sub-genres ofpoetry.	A, C	K1, K4
CO 2	Outline the development of numerous literary movements.	B	K1, K2
CO 3	Classify the poets as representatives of their periods.	A, C	K3, K5
CO 4	Rationalize British Poetry as an aesthetic record of thesocieties concerned.	B, C, D	K5
CO 5	Analyse British Poetry with a focus on content and form.	F, G	K4, K5
CO 6	Apply and evaluate the structure and style of the poetrywith poetic tools.	F, G	K6

K1 – Remember, K2 – Understand, K3 – Apply, K4 – Analyse, K5 – Evaluate, K6 - Create

UNIT I:

EDMUND SPENSER: PROTHALAMION

JOHN MILTON: ON HIS BLINDNESS

ROBERT HERRICK: TO THE VIRGINS, TO MAKE MUCH OF TIME

UNIT II:

JOHN DONNE: THE ECSTASY

ANDREW MARVELL: TO HIS COY MISTRESS

WILLIAM BLAKE: THE LAMB

UNIT III:

OLIVER GOLDSMITH: THE DESERTED VILLAGE

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY: ODE TO THE WEST WIND

JOHN KEATS: LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

UNIT IV:

ROBERT BROWNING: FRA LIPPO LIPPI

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON: THE LOTOS-EATERS

MATTHEW ARNOLD: THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

UNIT V:

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS: THE WINDHOVER: TO CHRIST OUR LORD

FRANCIS THOMPSON: THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

PHILIP LARKIN: NEXT, PLEASE

UNIT - I

EDMUND SPENSER: PROTHALAMION

Life & Career:

Edmund Spenser (c. 1552/1553 – 13 January 1599) was an English poet, and is best known for his epic poem The Faerie Queene, which he wrote for Elizabeth I. Spenser is often remembered as one of the most important poets in the English language, using an interesting writing style that became known as the Spenserian stanza and a voluminous vocabulary. Edmund Spenser was born in East Smithfield, London. His exact date of birth is unknown, as is his parenthood, although it is thought he was probably the son of John Spenser, a journeyman clothmaker. Spenser was educated in London at the Merchant Taylors' School and later attended Pembroke College, Cambridge as a sizar. Here, he became a friend of Gabriel Harvey, although they had differing views on poetry.

In 1578, Spenser became secretary to John Young, Bishop of Rochester, for a short time. In 1579, he published The Shepheardes Calender.

Following this, a year later, Edward Spenser was serving under Lord Deputy, Arthur Grey, 14th Baron Grey de Wilton. He was sent to Ireland and served under Lord Grey with Walter Raleigh at the Siege of Smerwick massacre.

However, when Lord Grey was recalled to England, Spenser stayed on in Ireland, because, by this time, he had acquired other official posts and lands in the Munster Plantation. He remained in Ireland for almost all of his following years.

Sometime between 1587 and 1589, Spenser acquired his main estate at Kilcolman, near Doneraile in North Cork. He later bought a second holding to the south, at Rennie, on a rock overlooking the river Blackwater in North Cork, where its ruins are still visible today.

A short distance away grew a tree, locally known as "Spenser's Oak" until it was destroyed in a lightning strike in the 1960s. It is thought that he wrote some of The Faerie Queene under this tree. Spenser published the first three books of his most famous work, The Faerie Queene, in 1590. He travelled to London to publish and promote the work and was successful enough to receive £50 a year from the Queen.

A year later, he published a translation in verse of Joachim Du Bellay's sonnets, Les Antiquités de Rome (1558). This work, entitled Ruines of Rome: by Bellay, may also have been influenced by Latin poems on the same subject. In 1596, Edmund Spenser wrote another of his

famous works — a prose pamphlet titled A View of the Present State of Ireland. It wasn't published until the mid-seventeenth century, probably due to the content of the pamphlet and so circulated as a manuscript at first. It was written in the form of dialogue and argued that Ireland would never be totally "pacified" by the English until its indigenous language and customs had been destroyed, if necessary by violence.

Spenser married his first wife, Machabyas Childe, in 1579, around the same time he published The Shepheardes Calender. Together, they had two children, Sylvanus and Katherine.

By 1594, Edmund Spenser's first wife had died, and in that year he married a much younger Elizabeth Boyle, a relative of Richard Boyle, 1st Earl of Cork. He addressed to her the sonnet sequence Amoretti, and the marriage itself was celebrated in Epithalamion. Together, they had a son named Peregrine. Following his death, Elizabeth Boyle remarried twice.

During the Nine Years' War in 1598, Spenser was driven from his home by the native Irish forces of Aodh Ó Néill. His castle at Kilcolman was burned and it is thought that one of his infant children died in the blaze. After this, he travelled back to London, where he died aged forty-six or forty-seven. His coffin was carried to his grave in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey by other poets, who threw pens and pieces of poetry into his grave.

Outline of the Poem:

Prothalamion, a spousal verse by Edmund Spenser is one of the loveliest wedding odes. The verse is essentially the wedlock of twin sisters; Lady Catherine and Lady Elizabeth with Henry Gilford and William Peter.

Conversely, on comparison with Epithalamion, the verse is considered less realistic and unappealing. Spenser incorporates classical imagery strongly with a beautiful atmosphere in the poem. The emphasis of renaissance on Prothalamion brings a tinge of mythological figures like Venus, Cynthia and Titan.

Stanza 1:

The poet walks along the banks of River Thames to forget the worries of his personal life. He was completely frustrated with the Job at the court and all he wanted is some mental peace. The cool breeze covered the heat of the sun by reflecting a shade of tender warmth. There are flowers everywhere and the birds chirp happily. The poet as a refrain requests the river to flow softly until he ends his song.

Stanza 2:

The poet happens to see a group of nymphs along the banks of the river. Here the poet makes use of first Mythological figure, the nymphs which are supernatural maidens known for their purity. Every nymph looked stunning and had loose strands of hair falling to the shoulders. Nymphs together prepared bouquets of flowers with primroses, white lilies, red roses, tulips, violets and daisies.

Stanza 3:

As the second mystic entity, Spenser introduces the swans. Swans that swam across the river looked holy and whiter than Jupiter who disguised as a swan to win his love, Leda. But, yes, what Spenser says next is that these swans are shinier than Leda herself. The River Thames requests its waters not to dirty the sacred wings of the swan.

Stanza 4:

The nymphs were all dumb struck watching the swans swim across the river. Swans are usually assigned to drawing the chariot of Venus, the goddess of love. The white lilies are matched to the purity or virginity of the nymphs.

Stanza 5:

As the next step, the nymphs prepare poises and a basket of flowers which look like bridal chamber adorned with flowers. The nymphs on excitement of the upcoming wedding throw the flowers over the River Thames and birds. The nymphs also prepare a wedding song. With all the fragrance of flowers, Thames exactly looked like the Peneus, the river of ancient fame flowing along the Tempe and the Thessalian valley.

Stanza 6:

The song of the nymph mesmerizes with an enchanting musical effect. Here Spenser wishes the couple live forever with swans' contented heart and eternal bliss as these birds are the wonder of heaven. He also prays to Cupid and Venus to bless the couple with love and care lest they be safe from deceit and dislike. With endless affluence and happiness, their kids must be a sign of dignity and a threat to immoral people.

Stanza 7:

The river Lee, with headquarters at Kent, flows with happiness on such an occasion. As the birds flew above the swans, the sight looked like moon (Cynthia) shining above the stars.

Stanza 8:

Once the wedding starts at London, the poet begins to recollect his encounters at the mansion and the building where the wedding occurs.

Stanza 9:

The Earl of Essex lived in the mighty castle which actually was the venue of the wedding. He was so chivalrous that he served as a danger to foreign countries. His brave attack on Spain shot him to fame and entire Spain shook at his very name. Queen Elizabeth was so proud of him and he deserves to be celebrated with a poem.

Stanza 10:

The Earl of Sussex walked towards the river and he looked fresh with his lovely golden hair. He was accompanied by two young men who were brave, handsome and glorious. They resembled the Twins of Jupiter namely, Castor and Pollux. The men held the hands of the brides and their wedlock begun thereby.

With all the necessary ingredients for a successful verse, Prothalamion is embroidered with long lasting style and simplicity.

Critical Appreciation:

Prothalamion is Spenser's second wedding song; the poem is modeled on his own marriage song called Epithalamion. In this poem, he celebrates the occasion of the marriage of the daughters of Earl of Worcester. In this poem the poet attempts a patronage and the favour of the Queen.

Prothalamion (1596) was written at a time in his life of disappointment and trouble when Spenser was only a rare visitor to London. Here he is a passive observer than the bridegroom turned poet and hence though as beautiful metrically as his own marriage ode Epithalamion, it naturally does not voice the same ecstasy of passion.

One can find reference in the poem to the poet's own discontent to the history of Templeas to the achievements of Essex.

According to C. S. Lewis, "interesting as they are in themselves, they do not seem to contribute much to total effect." The poem has two themes-the obvious one of celebrating the ladies going to their betrothal and the personal theme which serves for introduction and passing reference once again towards the end. The tone of the two is in great contrast. The first one is gay, full of colour, beauty and hope of fulfillment; the second sad and tragic. The poet is conscious of the contrast and makes an attempt to suppress the sad not in a gay poem. At one point, the poem verges on the elegiac, but the poet deliberately steers himself to the opposite shore on consideration of decorum.

It is a cleverly contrived poem. So far as the poet is concerned, the more important theme is the personal one, the statement of neglected merit, the loss of the great patron and the acquiring of a new one in Essex. But this is hidden and artfully introduced. The most powerful lines are those devoted to Essex, to whom Spenser devotes about 23lines. These lines are direct address. The poem is skillfully directed to take in this matter.

The train of thought and the plan of poem are so conducted that the passage on Essexis integral and not superimposed. The bridegrooms play a minor role and are colourless and have only a reflected glory which they take from Essex.

The verse is an adaptation of the Italian canzone of 18 lines with varying rhyme scheme. The last two lines serve as a burden/refrain to the whole poem. The last line is repeated with variation. And the penultimate line slightly varied to suit the meaning. Poem is lyrical throughout and the repetition adds to the lyrical effect. The organization of stanza makes for great variety in the cadence with the mixing of 10 syllabic and 6 syllabic lines. There are fourteen of the former and four of the latter in each stanza. The successful handling of the very complicated arrangement shows the poet's mastery over a new metre. In Spenser's poetry, we get a characteristic blending of mythology and realism. Spenser added a new dignity to English verse by handling it in an exalted manner with a unique style, thought and art.

JOHN MILTON: ON HIS BLINDNESS

Life & Career:

John Milton (December 9, 1608 – November 8, 1674) was an English poet and intellectual who wrote during a period of political and religious turmoil. He’s best known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, which depicts the fall of Lucifer and the temptation of mankind.

Milton was born in London, the eldest son of John Milton, a skillful composer and professional scrivener (a professional who wrote and copied out documents, as literacy was not widespread), and his wife Sarah. Milton's father was estranged from his own father, since the older generation was Catholic and Milton Sr. had become a Protestant. As a boy, Milton was privately tutored by Thomas Young, a well-educated Presbyterian whose influence was likely the beginning of Milton's radical religious views.

After leaving private tutoring behind, Milton attended St. Paul's, where he studied classical Latin and Greek, and eventually Christ's College, Cambridge. His first known compositions are a pair of psalms written when he was only fifteen years old. Although he had a reputation for being especially studious, he came into conflict with his tutor, Bishop William Chappel. The extent of their conflict is disputed; Milton did leave the college for a time—either as punishment or because of widespread illness—and when he returned, he had a new tutor.

In 1629, Milton graduated with honors, ranking fourth in his class. He intended to become a priest in the Anglican church, so he stayed at Cambridge to get his master's degree. Despite spending several years at the university, Milton expressed a fair bit of disdain for university life—its strict, Latin-based curriculum, the behavior of his peers—but did make a few friends, including the poet Edward King and the dissident theologian Roger Williams, better known as the founder of Rhode Island. He spent some of his time writing poetry, including his first published short poem, "Epitaph on the admirable Dramaticke Poet, W. Shakespeare."

"On His Blindness / When I consider how my light is spent" is a sonnet written by John Milton, an acclaimed seventeenth century English poet. As a sonneteer, Milton widened the range of the sonnet and revived the classical or the Petrarchan sonnet from, falling into parts: the first, an octave (eight lines) rhyming abba abba, reveals the poet's fears and complaints; and the second, a sestet (six lines) rhyming cde cde, teaches us total submission to God's design.

This poem was written in 1655; three years after Milton become completely blind, and was marked by a brooding sense of despondency arising out of his blindness. It was written when Milton was in his forty-fourth year. The poem can be divided into two parts. In the first half of the poem, he expresses his sadness at the loss of his eye-sight.

He finds himself alone in this dark and wide world. God has given him the talent of writing poetry. This gift is lying useless within. He is expressing his unhappiness about the fact that the best part of his life would go waste without producing any work of creative importance.

It is like death for him to hide his talent. He fears that God will rebuke him for not using his talent because he want to serve God with this gift. He grumbles against God and he, thus, raises the question of the justness of God's ways to man in relation to his own loss of sight. He foolishly asks himself whether God demands work from him although the God has made him blind. Thus the first half of the poem reflects the poet's mood of sadness and murmuring.

However, the second part of the poem expresses Milton's feeling of resignation and his undiminished faith in God's justice. He accepts total submission to the will of God. The poet's inner faith consoles him and stops his murmur. He realises that God does not need anyone's praise or work. Those who bear the duties given by God served him best. God only want complete faith in him. Those who patiently serve God and wait for his orders are also his true servants. The sonnet teaches us to be content with our lot in life and also that it is man's duty to stand in readiness to serve God without any complaint or protest.

Outline of the poem:

"On His Blindness" is one of the best known and very significant sonnets written by John Milton. This is an intensely personal poem which has a reference to his blindness which left him completely dejected and depressed. This is a Petrarchan sonnet and it is divided into two parts: Octave and Sestet. The sonnet, although begins on a sad note, ends up with hope, satisfaction and a firm belief in God's will.

Milton's Sonnet On his Blindness is a Petrarchan Sonnet. The First Part presents Milton's fear, anxiety and dejection over his loss of eye sight and his concern over the death of his God-given Talent. The second part has a twist in the thought, where Milton is convinced by patient thoughts that God does not demand labour from him after denying him "light" and he concludes that "they also serve who only stand and wait". Thus through this sonnet form, using many literary devices, the poet "justifies the ways of God to men"

In "On His Blindness" Milton was a deeply religious poet and he wanted to write great poems in praise of God. The blindness which crept upon him at the age of 43shattered his dreams of writing great poems and Milton becomes very devastated at the loss of his eye sight. He begins the sonnet with an expression of profound sense of loss. He expresses the fear that half of his "light" (life) is already spent and now his world has become dark due to the loss of his eye sight.

Milton was a poetic genius and he considers that he is not able to make the best use of this God-given "Talent" because of his loss of eye sight. He feels very sad that hiding this God's gift is similar to burying it and causing the death of his talent. Milton feels guilty that, due to the loss of his eye sight, he is not able to write poems in praise of God. He thinks that on the Day of Judgement, God might perhaps chide him for wasting the "Talents" given to him. In a moment of anxiety, Milton questions himself whether God would demand the same amount of labour from a blind man as he would expect from any other normal Person.

Milton becomes very sad at the thought of God expecting as much labour from a blind man as from those blessed with eye-sight. But when he reconsiders this fact and slowly tries to analyse, he is able to understand the fact that God actually does not require any such labour. Patience, which is personified here tells him that, "God doth not need Either Man's work or his own gifts, who best bear his mild yoke, they serve him best". Milton is thus convinced that God does not need man's work or his own gifts.

The best gift one could give back to God is to bear his mild yoke. Milton says that the God's splendour resembles that of a King and he has thousands of people who wait to obey his command and will always be ready to work over land and ocean without rest. Milton concludes his sonnet with a great satisfaction that even those people who stand and wait to receive God's commands equally serve God. Thus according to Milton, those who patiently wait to receive God's commands also render him their genuine service similar to others who do their service.

Explanation:

Stanza – 1

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;

These lines quoted above have been taken from the poem 'On His Blindness' written John Milton. It was written in 1655 three years after Milton became completely blind. This

sonnet is marked by a brooding sense of despondency arising out of his blindness. He feels sad that he will not be able to serve the God with his talent of writing poetry.

In this poem Milton is very unhappy and feels sad because he became completely blind when he was in his forty-fourth year. He is left alone in this dark and vast world and this condition intensifies a blind man's feeling of helplessness. God had given him the talent of writing poetry. But this gift is lying useless with him as God has made him blind. He feels that it is like soul killing for him to hide his talent of writing poetry. He is ready to serve God with his talent and present his true account. But he feels unable to do so due to his blindness. He fears that God will rebuke him for not using this gift. Thus these lines show Milton's lament on his untimely loss of sight.

Stanza – 2

"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best.

These lines quoted above have been taken Milton's sonnet 'On His Blindness'. Here the poet is expressing his unhappiness and sadness at the loss of his eye-sight and laments that the best part of his life would go waste without producing any work of creative importance.

Milton is very sad at the loss of his eye-sight. He grumbles and in helpless anguish asks foolishly whether God could be so unjust as to expect active service even from a blind man. But then poet's patience consoles his needling anguish. It tells him god is the master of this universe and he does not need either man's work or the return of his gifts. Countless angels are engaged in God's active service and carry our his orders submissively all over the world. Those who patiently bear the duties given by God are his true servants. These lines show Milton's undiminished faith in God and his ways or Justice.

Stanza – 3

His state is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er Land and Ocean without rest:

They also serve who only stand and wait."

In this poem the poet expresses his sadness at his blindness. He grumbles against God. But his patience and unshaken faith in Gods justice consoles him.

Milton's patience calms him and tells him that God is the benign creator of the universe. He does not need man's work. God is like a great king. Thousands of angels are at his service. They rush over land and ocean without rest in order to carryout his commands. But some angels do not work. They stand and only wait for his orders. They are also his best servant. He is consoled by the realisation that God is best served not through worldly attainments but through sincere devotion. At the end of the poem the poet signifies patience, devotion and submission to God by mentioning the phrase 'stand and wait'.

Critical Appreciation:

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,

The poem begins with the speaker's consideration of how he has spent the years of his life, represented as his "light." This light and being a metaphor for life are also a literal representation of Milton's life days in which he could see. The second line expands on that, explaining that before even half of the speaker's life had passed, he is forced to live in a world that is "dark… and wide." Since Milton went blind at 42, he'd had the opportunity to use his writing skills, his "talents" in the employee of Oliver Cromwell. He had risen to what was, more than likely, the peak of his possible achievement, the highest position a writer in England could hope to gain. He did not know at the time that his greatest works would be written while he was blind. His "talents" come into play in the next lines, some of the trickiest in the whole piece.

And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide,

Milton speaks of his "talent," this talent, his skills with words and love for writing, was his entire life. His livelihood and self-worth depended on it. This word "talent" is the most important in understanding these lines. As a biblical scholar, Milton was familiar with the texts of the bible

and chose to reference The Parable of Talents from Matthew 25 here. When Milton refers to the talent, he relates the loss of his ability to read and write to the servant in Matthew 25 who buries the money given to him by God in the desert rather than investing it wisely. It is "death" to Milton to have hidden, through no choice of his own in this case, his talents beneath his blindness. The next lines begin to speak to Milton's devotion to God. He explains that his talents are still hidden even "though [his] soul [is] more bent" to serve God and present his accounts through writing. He wants nothing more than to do right by God and serve him. In this context, "account" refers to both his records in writing and money (once more connecting his dilemma to that in The Parable of Talents). He must do all he can speak for God, "lest he returning chide." So that if God returns, he will not chide or admonish Milton for not taking advantage of the gifts that God has given him.

"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"

I fondly ask.

At this point, Milton is finishing the sentence that he began at the beginning of the poem with the word, "When." In short, he asks, "does God require those without light to labor?" He wants to know whether when he cannot continue his work due to his blindness, will God still require work of him.

But Patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need

Either man's work or his own gifts; who best

Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state

Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed

And post o'er land and ocean without rest:

They also serve who only stand and wait."

Milton continues, invoking the personification of Patience in the next line. Patience appears as a pacifying force to "prevent that murmur" The speaker would question God (as described above). Patience replies to the speaker's internal question, and the remainder of the poem is that response.

Patience explains that God does not need special gifts or works from man, such as Milton's writings, but loves best those who "Bear his mild yoke." This complicated phrase references a "yoke," or a wooden frame used to be placed around plowing animals' neck and shoulders. This would allow the animals to be directed around the field. Essentially, those who give over their lives to God and accept that he is in control of their fate are loved best. That is what God requires, not "gifts" or "work."

Patience comes to the final point of the poem in the next lines.

Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state

Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed

And post o'er land and ocean without rest:

They also serve who only stand and wait."

Patience compares God to a king, saying that his "state is kingly" with "thousands at his bidding." In the state that is the world, these people are part of the unlimited resources of the king, God. The "post" (or move quickly) over "Land and Ocean" without pausing for rest. The poem ends with the answer to the speaker's unasked question that those who cannot rush over land and ocean, like Milton, also serve God.

ROBERT HERRICK: TO THE VIRGINS, TO MAKE MUCH OF TIME

Life & Career:

Born on August 24, 1591, Robert Herrick was the seventh child and fourth son born to a London goldsmith, Nicholas, and his wife, Julian Stone Herrick. When Herrick was fourteen months old, his father died. At age 16, Herrick began a ten-year apprenticeship with his uncle. The apprenticeship ended after only six years, and Herrick, at age twenty-two, matriculated at Saint John's College, Cambridge. He graduated in 1617.

Over the next decade, Herrick became a disciple of Ben Jonson, about whom he wrote five poems. In 1623 Herrick took holy orders, and six years later, he became vicar of Dean Prior in Devonshire. His post carried a term for a total of thirty-one years, but during the Great Rebellion in 1647, he was removed from his position because of his Royalist sympathies. Following the restoration of Charles II, Herrick was reinstated at Dean Prior where he resided

from 1662 until his death in October 1674. He never married, and many of the women mentioned in his poems are thought to have been fictional.

His principal work is Hesperides; or, the Works Both Human and Divine of Robert Herrick, Esq. (1648). A group of religious poems printed in 1647 appear within the same book under a separate title page bearing the name His Noble Numbers. The entire collection contains more than 1200 short poems, ranging in form from epistles and eclogues to epigrams and love poems. Herrick was influenced by classical Roman poetry and wrote on pastoral themes, dealing mostly with English country life and village customs.

Outline of the Poem:

Stanza 1:

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.

The poem begins with the persona urging the readers, especially young women, to pick the buds of roses while they still could. They warn them that time flew, waiting for no one. To substantiate this point, they remind the readers that even the famed beauty of flowers wilt the next day, thus cautioning young women to do what they wished while they still could.

Stanza 2:

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,
The higher he's a-getting,
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he's to setting.

Again, transience of time is emphasized here. The glory of the Sun even as he rises is but a race that eventually ends with it setting. How time is precious is thus highlighted.

Stanza 3:

That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst

Times still succeed the former.

This stanza too echoes the sentiments of the previous stanza. ‘Age’ here refers to human life essentially, how the best part of it is the first days of youth when the “blood was warmer”. As youth is spent and old age seeps in, life gets progressively worse, time triumphing at the end.

Stanza 4:

Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry;
For having lost but once your prime,
You may forever tarry.

In the final stanza again, the persona purges the readers to not be ‘coy’ and make the most of their time. For the prime of youth once last will always be lost, never to be found again. Hence, the persona urges young women to forgo their inhibitions and marry in their glorious youth.

Conclusion:

This is a motivational poem that urges the readers to not let anything hold them back and forge ahead towards their dreams and aspirations, taking no thought of the morrow.

Critical Analysis:

Robert Herrick (1591-1674) was an eminent English Poet. Interestingly, he was also an Anglican cleric. Famous works of his include ‘To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time’, ‘Hesperides’ and ‘Hymn to Venus’.

In the first stanza of ‘To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time’, the speaker begins his directions to the “Virgins” mentioned in the title of the poem. Before embarking on an analysis of this poem, a reader should be able to get a basic understanding of what it is the speaker. It is promoting through the title. He is interested in making sure that “Virgins” do everything they can to “Make Much of Time” or make the most of the time they have.

He first tells the virgins that they need to “Gather” their “rose-buds” while they are still able. This line is not of the poet’s own creation but rather comes from Ausonius or Virgil. It is in reference to a Latin phrase that asks that one utilize their beauty before it is gone. One should “gather” or pick up the beautiful items of life they may not have access to once their own beauty is gone.

No matter whether one heeds his warning or not, the speaker makes sure the reader remembers that “Time” is going to continue to fly. It is moving whether one takes advantage of it or not.

In the concluding couplet of this section, it becomes clear that it is one’s own beauty. The speaker does not want to go to waste. He sees time as damaging to women and that they must do everything they can to use their looks while they’re young.

In the second quatrain, the speaker turns to one of the natural elements of the world that tell of the passing of time, the sun. It is referred to as the “glorious lamp of heaven.” The sun is directly connected to God in that it shines his light down upon the earth. Just like God, there is no way to control it. The sun will continue to rise, getting higher and higher as if it is racing the other elements of the world.

The rising leads directly into the part of life the speaker sees women as having to fear, the “setting.” The peak of one’s life is only one more step to eventual decline.

In the third stanza, the speaker goes on to tell the women listening to his words that they are “best” at the age which “is the first / When youth and blood are warmer.” It is in the early days of youth a woman is most valuable. This is the period of time she should take advantage of.

If one does not do as he suggests, the time will be “spent, the worse” until time passes one by. The beauty of youth will be gone and “Time” will have control over one’s later future.

The final quatrain concludes the speaker’s previous arguments and tells the women who might be listening to him they should not play games with their lives. They should not be “coy” in their decisions and interactions with men but “go marry” as soon as possible.

This is a decision he sees as being crucial to a woman’s life and happiness. She must marry while she is beautiful, or the opportunity will be lost. The “Virgin” might “forever tarry” if she loses her “prime.”

UNIT - II

JOHN DONNE: THE ECSTASY

Life & Career:

John Donne was born in 1572 in London, England. He is known as the founder of the Metaphysical Poets, a term created by Samuel Johnson, an eighteenth-century English essayist, poet, and philosopher. The loosely associated group also includes George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Andrew Marvell, and John Cleveland. The Metaphysical Poets are known for their ability to startle the reader and coax new perspective through paradoxical images, subtle argument, inventive syntax, and imagery from art, philosophy, and religion using an extended metaphor known as a conceit. Donne reached beyond the rational and hierarchical structures of the seventeenth century with his exacting and ingenious conceits, advancing the exploratory spirit of his time.

Donne entered the world during a period of theological and political unrest for both England and France; a Protestant massacre occurred on Saint Bartholomew's day in France; while in England, the Catholics were the persecuted minority. Born into a Roman Catholic family, Donne's personal relationship with religion was tumultuous and passionate, and at the center of much of his poetry. He studied at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities in his early teen years. He did not take a degree at either school, because to do so would have meant subscribing to the Thirty-nine Articles, the doctrine that defined Anglicanism. At age twenty he studied law at Lincoln's Inn. Two years later he succumbed to religious pressure and joined the Anglican Church after his younger brother, convicted for his Catholic loyalties, died in prison. Donne wrote most of his love lyrics, erotic verse, and some sacred poems in the 1590s, creating two major volumes of work: Satires and Songs and Sonnets.

In 1598, after returning from a two-year naval expedition against Spain, Donne was appointed private secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton. While sitting in Queen Elizabeth's last Parliament in 1601, Donne secretly married Anne More, the sixteen-year-old niece of Lady Egerton. Donne's father-in-law disapproved of the marriage. As punishment, he did not provide a dowry for the couple and had Donne briefly imprisoned.

This left the couple isolated and dependent on friends, relatives, and patrons. Donne suffered social and financial instability in the years following his marriage, exacerbated by the

birth of many children. He continued to write and published the Divine Poems in 1607. In Pseudo-Martyr, published in 1610, Donne displayed his extensive knowledge of the laws of the Church and state, arguing that Roman Catholics could support James I without compromising their faith. In 1615, James I pressured him to enter the Anglican Ministry by declaring that Donne could not be employed outside of the Church. He was appointed Royal Chaplain later that year. His wife died in 1617 at thirty-three years old shortly after giving birth to their twelfth child, who was stillborn. The Holy Sonnets are also attributed to this phase of his life.

In 1621, he became dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral. In his later years, Donne's writing reflected his fear of his inevitable death. He wrote his private prayers, Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, during a period of severe illness and published them in 1624. His learned, charismatic, and inventive preaching made him a highly influential presence in London. Best known for his vivacious, compelling style and thorough examination of mortal paradox, John Donne died in London on March 31, 1631.

Outline of the Poem:

Stanza 1: We, two lovers, each thinking of the other as the best person in the world, sat on the river-bank which was raised high like a pillow to enable the reclining heads of violet flowers to rest on it.

Stanza 2: Our hands were firmly grasped and from them a strong perfume emanated. Our eyes met and reflected the image of each other. It appeared as if our eyes were strung together on a double thread.

Stanza 3: Our hands were firmly clasped together and this was the means of bringing us close to each other. Our eyes reflected our images and this was the only fusion of our love.

Stanza 4: Just as when two equally powerful enemies fight each other while fate holds the victory in a state of balance, undecided which way to turn the scale, in the same way, our souls, which had left our bodies to sublimate to a state of bliss, hung between the two of us uncertain of their future.

Stanza 5: While our souls communicated with each other in this situation, we lay quiet and motionless like statues built over the monument of the dead. All through the day our bodies continued to remain in the same position without movement or speech.

Stanzas 6 & 7: If any stranger, whose soul had been purified by a similar process had stood beside our souls, and had been capable of understanding the language of the souls his purified mind would have forgotten the existence of the body and enlightened and sharpened the faculties of his mind, such a soul may not have understood the conversation of our souls because both our souls meant and spoke the same thing, but that soul might have undergone a fresh process of purification and felt more refined than before.

Stanza 8: Our souls have reached a state of ecstasy which revealed to us what we did not know earlier. We realised that love was not sex experience. We discovered the first time that love really is a matter of the soul and not of the body.

Stanza 9: Souls are made of various elements of which we have no knowledge. It is love which brings together two souls and makes them one, though, in reality, the two have separate existence.

Stanza 10: When a violet plant is transplanted (removed from one place and replanted in a better soil) it shows a marked improvement in its colour, size and strength. After transplantation it almost doubles itself and also grows more rapidly.

Stanza 11: In a similar manner when love brings two souls together it imparts to them a great zeal and life. The stronger (or noble soul) supplements (or removes) the deficiencies of the lesser soul. Love also removes the feeling of loneliness felt by single souls.

Stanza 12: As a result of the union of two souls, so to say, a new soul comes into being. This new soul knows of what elements the two souls are composed. It makes us realize that the substances of which we are made are not subject to any change.

Stanza 13: Alas, we have so far and so long ignored our bodies. The bodies are ours, but we are distinct from the bodies. We are souls, we are of spiritual substance; we are like heavenly planets while our bodies are the spheres in which we move.

Stanza 14: We are thankful to our bodies, because they brought us together in the first instance. Our bodies surrendered their sense in order to enable our love to be spiritual. Our bodies are not impure matter, but they are like an alloy (an alloy when mixed with gold makes it tougher and brighter). The body is useful agent for holy love.

Stanza 15: The influence of heavenly bodies on man comes through the air. So when a soul wishes to love another soul, it can contact it through the medium of the body. Hence a union of souls may need the contact of bodies as the first step.

Stanza 16: Just as the blood which is an important constituent of our bodies labours to produce the essence (the semen) which helps in uniting two bodies, in the same way a spiritual love produces a kind of ecstasy which binds the two souls together. This subtle knot of love may not be fully understood:

Stanza 17: Just as blood produces elements which brings about the union of sense and soul which constitute a man, in the same way the lover's soul leaves some linking elements like the sense and the bodily faculties to express their love. The sense and faculty of the body come to the aid of the soul, which is like a prisoner. Just as a prince who is imprisoned cannot gain freedom unless somebody comes to his aid, in the same way the senses of the body go to the aid of the lover's soul and secure freedom for it.

Stanza 18: We must now turn to our bodies so that weak men may have a test of high love. Love sublimates the soul but it is through the medium of the body that love is first experienced. The body is as important as the soul in the matter of love.

Stanza 19: If some lover like us has heard this discourse (made by two souls with one experience) let him look carefully at us. After our pure love when we go back to our bodies he will find no change in us because we shall not revert to physical sex again.

Critical Analysis:

The poem “The Ecstasy” is one of John Donne's most popular poems, which expresses his unique and unconventional ideas about love. It expounds the theme that pure, spiritual or real love can exist only in the bond of souls established by the bodies. For Donne, true love only exists when both bodies and souls are inextricably united. Donne criticizes the platonic lover who excludes the body and emphasizes the soul.

The fusion of body and soul strengthens spiritual love. Donne compares bodies to planets and souls to the angels that body and souls are inseparable but they are independent. According to the medieval mystical conception, 'ecstasy' means a trance-like state in which the soul leaves the body, comes out, and holds communion with the Divine, the Supreme or the Over-soul of the Universe. In Christianity also, it denotes the state of mystic/religious communion with God. Donne uses the religious and philosophical term with religious and philosophical connotations to build his own theory of love.

The poem is an expression of Donne's philosophy of love. Donne agrees with Plato that true love is spiritual. It is a union of the souls. But unlike Plato, Donne doesn't ignore the claims

of the body. It is the body that brings the lovers together. Love begins in sensuous apprehension, and spiritual love follows the sensuous. So the claim of the body must not be ignored. Union of bodies is essential to make possible the union of souls. The poem is an unbroken series of narration, argument and even contemplation.

The poet begins the narration of the event with a typically passionate scene as the backdrop for the lovers to embrace and experience the 'ecstasy'. The setting is natural, very calm and quiet. The scenery is described in erotic terms: the riverbank is "like a pillow on a bed"; it also is "pregnant". The reference to pillow, bed and pregnancy suggest sexuality, though the poet says that their love is 'asexual'. Indeed, the image of asexual reproduction of the violent plant is used to compare the lovers' only 'propagation'. It is springtime, and violets are in bloom. To a Renaissance reader, the image of violets symbolizes faithful love and truth. It is pastoral settings were lovers are sitting together, holding each others hand and looking intently into each other's eyes. Their eyes meet and reflect the images of each other, and their sights are woven together. They get a kind of sensation within their hearts and blood, resulting in perspiration and blushing. They become ecstatic because their souls have escaped from their bodies to rise to a state of bliss. When love joins two souls, they mingle with each other and give birth to a new and finer soul, which removes the defects and supplies whatever is lacking in either single soul. The new re-animated soul made up of their two separate souls gives them the ecstasy. But they cannot forget the body, which is the vehicle, and container, cover and house of the soul.

The lovers' souls leave their bodies, which become mere lifeless figures. Finally, they are united into a single soul. Donne tries to convey the readers that the foundation of spiritual love is the physical attachment; the eyes serve as a gateway to the soul. Moreover, the physical union has produced an even stronger spiritual bond that is far more powerful than each individual's soul. Donne refers the violet to tell us that the fusion of the lover's soul produces a new "abler soul" like the violet, which doubles its vigor when it is grafted together with another. Then the lovers are now able to seek the spiritual pleasure rather than purely physical pleasure. In this union the two souls find strength like a violet when it is transplanted. As such, the single united soul is able to grow with new energy. The united soul is perfect, unchanging and also with new energy. The united soul is perfect, unchanging and also transcends the "defects of loneliness", or the single soul. The two lovers now understand that true love is the result of their physical attachment provoking spiritual union. Souls are spiritual beings. They move with the help of the

bodies. Body is the medium of contact of the two souls. Therefore, the lovers turn to their bodies and try to understand the mystery of love. Body is the medium to experience love. So spirits must act through bodies. If love is to be free, it requires physical as well as spiritual outlets.

The persona asks why our religious institutions have imposed blind thoughts diving the body and soul. The poem is also a criticism of the conventional idea of love that supports the separation of the bodies, and hence the souls. He makes an appeal to his readers to nourish their souls through their bodies and reach towards the point of extreme joy, or 'ecstasy'.

As a metaphysical poem this poem brings together (or juxtaposes) opposites; the poet has also reconciled such opposites as the medieval and the modern the spiritual and physical, the scientific or secular and the religious, the abstract and the concrete, the remote and the familiar, the ordinary and the metaphysical. This is largely done through imagery and conceit in which widely opposite concepts are brought together.

ANDREW MARVELL: TO HIS COY MISTRESS

Life & Career:

Andrew Marvell (31 March 1621 — 16 August 1678) was an English metaphysical poet, satirist and politician. He is remembered for his style of writing and satirical and religious themes within his poetry, often attacking the church and defending the right of Parliament. During the Commonwealth period, he was a close friend of John Milton, who helped him find employment in the Cromwell government. Some of Marvell's most famous poems are "To His Coy Mistress", "The Garden" and "An Horatian Ode", as well as his political satires "Flecknoe" and "The Character of Holland".

Andrew Marvell was born in 1621 in Winestead-in-Holderness, East Riding of Yorkshire, near the city of Kingston upon Hull. He was born to Anne Pease Marvell and Andrew Marvell, who was a Church of England clergyman. The family moved to Hull in 1624 as Marvell's father was appointed Lecturer at Holy Trinity Church there, and Marvell was educated at Hull Grammar School.

At the age of 13, Marvell attended Trinity College, Cambridge, where he received a BA degree in 1639. His earliest surviving verses lead to no conclusions about his religion and politics as a student. He intended to stay on to study for an MA, but his father drowned in "the

Tide of Humber" — the estuary at Hull made famous by "To his Coy Mistress" — in 1641, and he left shortly after.

Outline of the Poem:

The poem To His Coy Mistress is one of the most beautiful love poem by Andrew Marvell. Here the poet requests his beloved lady to leave her coyness and come forward to enjoy her youthful passion with him. It is a typical love poem, out of love the poet admits that if there were enough space and time, then both the poet and his stress would sit down and think which way to walk to pass their long day of love his lady should find rubies by the side of the Indian Ganges. When the poet said that an hundred years shall go to praise her eyes and gaze on her forehead and almost thirty thousand years will be spent to praise her body parts and the last stage will show her heart.

In the poem To His Coy Mistress, the poet's beloved restrain herself from his offering for the amusement of their love owing to her esteemed concepts of modesty. The minstrel flattered his mistress with argumentive reasonable thought of sound that are onwards in a neat righteousness. The initial tire of argument bland with fancies of timeless love toward mistress. The following segment shocks the lovers into the reality that time, youth and beauty are perishable and soon they will be stranded in the abandoned of vast eternity. Thirdly take measures a logical conclusion toward beloved's dilemma of chastity by establishing a sensual infatuation of affection as the only remedy to conquer the corroding effects of time.

As there is no limitless time and space provided for them, the poet wants to enjoy the utmost pleasure of life and love. Both of them are young and with a great force the poet and his lady love can open 'the strong iron gates of life'. Thus the poem truly becomes typical Metaphysical Love Poem. All the words utter by the poet are changed with the emotions of love urging his beloved to come out or leave behind her coyness.

Critical Analysis:

'To His Coy Mistress' has been rightly lauded as a small masterpiece of a poem, primarily because it packs so much into a relatively small space. It manages to carry along on simple rhyming couplets the complex passions of a male speaker, hungry for a sexual liaison with a lady before all-devouring time swallows them up.

Lines 1 - 20

The argument begins with an appeal to the coy mistress based on the idea that, if time and space were limitless, they could spend their days in leisure, she by the exotic Ganges river, for instance, and he by the ebb and flow of the Humber.

Sex needn't be a priority in this fantasy world. The speaker's ironic tone even allows for his love of the lady a decade before the old testament flood, and she could say no to his advances up to the time when the Jews convert to Christianity - which would never ever happen of course.

- This tongue-in-cheek allusion to religious notions of the end of the world, plus the underlying urges for physical intimacy, have been too much for certain Christian groups and others in more modern times. They would like the poem to be banned from being taught in school, claiming that it would negatively influence their children and that it condones predatory male behaviour.

Years he would spend growing his love, like a vegetable grows slowly, rooted and strong, in the earth. And he could bide his time admiring her physical beauty - her eyes, forehead, breasts and other parts.

This imaginary scenario is a clever and slightly ludicrous set-up. He is clearly in awe of her body and totally wants her heart but because she refuses to comply he introduces this idea of a timeless, boundless love. Time becomes a metaphor for love but is little more than a limitless resource.

Lines 21 - 32

But all of the previous means nothing because the reality is that the clock is ticking louder and louder. Time is flying. And then one day you find ten years have gotten behind you, no one told you when to run, and you missed the starting gun. Don't look over your shoulder. Don't look ahead either because there is a vast desert - eternity.

The last couplet of this section is perhaps the most quoted and puts a seal on the message: Let's make love while we're still alive.

Lines 33 - 46

The final part of this poem concentrates on the rational summing up of what's gone before. Note the first two words: *Now therefore,*..it's as if the speaker is saying, Look I've given

you two quite valid reasons for you to succumb, consequently this final effort will make you see sense.

Never has an adverb carried so much weight.

And the speaker has clearly thrown out the fantasies and wishes of the previous scenes. Gone are space and time and death, in their place is the all-consuming present. Just look at the use of the word now (3 times in lines 33-38), suggesting that the speaker cannot wait a second longer for his postponed fulfilment.

The emphasis is on the physical - skin, sport, roll and tear - the language being tinged with aggression and forceful energy.

- Line 34 is controversial as many later versions change the word *glew* for *dew* whereas in the original it is definitely glew. So the poet used this word to further the image of youthfulness, as line 33 imparts. The word glew, now archaic, could be the old-fashioned word for today's glue but this wouldn't make sense in the context of the couplet: *Sits on thy skin like morning glue,;* what makes better sense is to look for variants of either glow or glee - we still say the skin glows but do not often say the skin is happy. Her skin has a morning glow.
- As the lines progress the intensity increases, the passion starts to burn, and when the images of two birds of prey emerge, devouring time (instead of the other way round) the reader is surely taken beyond mere pleasures of the flesh.

Some think the poet is using the symbols of alchemy to express the deep-lying sexual chemistry implied in the second unusual image, that of a ball of sweetness to signify the union of male and female.

The iron gates could well be the barrier, the threshold, through which the speaker wishes to emerge. He sets the imperative. If they come together then who knows what will happen? Common sense and the logic of time will no longer dictate their lives.

WILLIAM BLAKE: THE LAMB

Life & Career:

William Blake was the most remarkable poet among the precursors of the Romantic Revival in English. The son of a hosier, Blake was born in London in November 1757. His father

James Blake and his mother Catherine were both Dissenters. There were five children in the family, Blake was the second one. It appears that the denial and deprivation of love from the family might have generated in Blake's mind, an exotic imaginary world of his own. At the age of seven, he was sent to a good drawing school in the strand, and four years later, in 1772, he began a seven years apprenticeship in engraving under James Besire. He was an engraver at the London Society of Antiquaries, where he learned his craft as well as acquired some of his poetical and political opinions. In 1779 he began studying at the Royal Academy and within a year began exhibiting pictures there, often with historical themes. At twenty-four he married Catherine Boucher, who was illiterate. So, he taught her to read, write, and make colors and prints. He never had children, but he was devoted to his younger brother Robert who taught him drawing and nursed him.

'The Lamb' is one of Blake's best-known poems. But, there are many others on the similar subject matter, whether religion or nature, that are just as good. These include 'The Divine Image,' 'Auguries of Innocence,' and 'The Garden of Love'. Other poems from other poets include 'Holy Innocents' by Christina Rossetti and 'First Sight' by Philip Larkin.

William Blake's poetry is as delighted as it is challenging, and its wide appeal ranges from the deceptive cadence of his lullaby-like pastorals and songs to the troubling notes of the tragedy of the lapsed soul and the stormy music of the prophetic works. The writings of Blake may be classified under the following literary heads:

1. Lyrical poems, including Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience
2. Irregular rhyme-less verse
3. Rhythmic prose and
4. Descriptive and critical prose

However, Blake's most widely read poems are contained in *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*.

Outline of the Poem:

One of the easiest poems, The Lamb by William Blake appreciates the innocence and simplicity of lamb in the beginning and its Creator as the poem progresses. In the first stanza, the poet asks the lamb a number of rhetorical questions about the One who has given it such traits.

The second stanza can be considered to the answer of the first stanza. In the second stanza, the poet says that it is Jesus Christ who, in Christian Mythology, also known as Lamb because of his innocence. Hence we find the juxtaposition of Lamb and Jesus Christ.

The poem has been divided into two stanzas having 10 lines each. We also find repetition in the poem. The rhyme scheme of the poem is AABB.

In the first stanza, the poet or the speaker rhetorically asks the "Little Lamb" if it knows who has created it. In the second line, the question is repeated in order to create a poetic effect. In the third line and onwards, he elaborates his question.

According to the poet/speaker, He is the one who gave it life and provided it with the food that it eats. His food (grass, leaves etc) grows along the streams (rivers) and also over the meadows. He gave it thick wool which covers its body preventing from excessive heat and cold. The poet calls the wool clothing of delight which is the softest clothing, wooly and very bright. The poet here is praising the power of the Creator who can give such amazing clothes to lamb.

He is the one who gave it such a tender voice i.e. gentle/kind/affectionate voice. It is so gentle and charming that it makes the whole valley rejoice. In the ending of the first stanza, the poet again asks the lamb who is its Creator,

As told earlier, in the second stanza, the poet now answers himself the questions that he raised in the previous stanza. The poet says that he will himself about the Creator to him (lamb). According to him, the Creator of Lamb is also known by the name of Lamb. It is because he too calls himself a Lamb.

The poet then gives the reasons why the Creator i.e. Jesus Christ is a Lamb – he is gentle, calm, sympathetic. The poet says that Christ became a little child. This line is again a reference to the Biblical assumption that Jesus is the son of God who is as innocent as lamb.

The speaker now reveals that he is a child saying that both the lamb and he himself are as innocent and meek as Christ. Thus they are also lambs (the three have innocence in common). In the final line, the speaker prays that God may bless it.

This poem is quite opposite to The Tyger in which the poet appreciates fierceness of the tiger.

Critical Analysis:

Stanza 1:

Little Lamb who made thee

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

The Lamb is a didactic poem. In this poem, the poet pays a tribute to Lord Christ who was innocent and pure like a child and meek and mild like a lamb. The little child asks the lamb if he knows who has created it, who has blessed it with life, and with the capacity to feed by the stream and over the meadow. The child asks him if the lamb knows who has given it bright and soft wool, which serves as its clothing, who has given it a tender voice that fills the valley with joy.

In the first stanza of ten lines of William Blake's poem The Lamb, the child who is supposed to be speaking to the lamb, gives a brief description of the little animal as he sees it. The lamb has been blessed with life and with the capacity to feed by the stream and over the meadow; it has been endowed with bright and soft wool which serves as its clothing; it has a tender voice that fills the valley with joy.

The readers here are provided with a true portrait of a lamb. In the poem, the child of innocence repeatedly asks the lamb as to who made him. Does he know who created him (the lamb)? The same question has been put repeatedly all through the first lines of the poem. The child addresses Little Lamb to ask him who made him and wants to ascertain whether he knows who made him. The child wants to know who gave the Lamb his life, who fed him while living along the river on the other side of the meadow. H also wants to know from the Lamb who supplied him with a pleasant body cover (clothing) which is softest, full of wool, and shining.
The Lamb is also asked by the child who gave him such a delicate bleating voice, which resounds a happy note in the surrounding valleys. The stanza is marked by the child's innocence which is the first stage in Blake's journey to the truth.

"The Child of Innocence lives by intuition enjoys a spontaneous communion with nature and sees the divine in all things."

Stanza 2:

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 & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

In the second stanza of the poem, there is an identification of the lamb, Christ, and the child. Christ has another name, that is, Lamb, because Christ is meek and mild like lamb. Christ was also a child when he first appeared on this earth as the Son of God. Hence the appropriateness of the following lines: "He became a little child:/I a child & thou a lamb,/We are called by his name." The child in this poem speaks to the lamb as if the lamb were another child and could respond to what is being said. The child shows his deep joy in the company of the lamb who is just like him, meek, and mild. The poem conveys the spirit of childhood – the purity, the innocence, the tenderness of childhood, and the affection that a child feels for little creatures.

A religious note is introduced in the poem because of the image of Christ as a child. The Lamb is a pastoral poem. The pastoral poem note in Blake is another symbol of joy and innocence. In the next ten lines of the second stanza from William Blake's poem The Lamb, the child himself proceeds to answer the questions he has asked the Lamb in the first stanza. The child says that the person, who has created the Lamb and has given many gifts described in the first stanza, is himself by the name of the Lamb.

It is Jesus Christ who calls himself a Lamb. Jesus the Lamb is meek (submissive) and mild (soft-natured), and he became a child for the sake of mankind. The narrator (I) is a child, he

is Lamb and they both are called by Jesus's name. The Lamb identifies with Christ to form a Trinity of Child, Lamb, and Redeemer (Jesus).

"The Lamb" has been written in the form of question and answer. Where its first stanza is descriptive and rural, the second concentrates on abstract spiritual matters and consists of analogy and explanation. The question of the child is both profound and naïve, and the apostrophic form of the poem makes a contribution to the effect of naiveté since the situation of a child in discourse with an animal is a convincing one and not just a literary contrivance. Still, by giving answers to his own question, the child succeeds in converting it into a rhetorical one, as a result countering the initial spontaneous sense of the poem. The answer is depicted as a riddle or a puzzle, and even though it's an easy one—child's play—this also helps in contributing to an essential sense of sardonic knowingness or artifice in the poem. However, the child's answer discloses his self-reliance in his simple Christian faith and his innocent acceptance of its teachings.

Explanation:

Lines 1–34

The speaker describes Auburn, the village of his childhood. Each scene is constructed nostalgically, highlighting beauty in memory. The weather is always perfect; the people are filled with "humble happiness." The buildings are "never-failing ... busy ... and decent." He describes how everyone works hard and then enjoys their leisure time together on the rolling hills, playing sports or dancing. He also describes a heartwarming scene of young lovers flirting while a scolding matron watches with disapproval. The nostalgic scenes end suddenly with the statement "But all these are charms are fled."

Lines 35–74

Between the cozy houses the speaker sees the effect of the "tyrant" and the "master" on the "smiling plain." In the presence of such evil, everyone has left the now-"desolate" village. The only guests are bittern birds that guard their nests with "hollow-sounding" calls. The once-cozy houses have sunken and molded. The speaker laments that the village—once filled with "bold peasantry" that was the "country's pride"—is now deserted. Everyone has left to chase wealth in the city, which the speaker calls the place where "men decay." This, the speaker claims, is where "England's griefs began." People used to be happy simply when their needs

were met, but with the rise of trade people longed for opulence and "unwieldy wealth." They longed to ease "every pang that folly pays to pride." This greed caused the decay of "rural mirth and manners."

Lines 75–136

The speaker describes returning home after years away, taking "solitary rounds" amid the dangled walkways and "ruined grounds." All around him he sees evidence of "the tyrant's power." Seeing how run-down the once-beautiful village has become fills the speaker's heart with emotion. He had long wished to return to Auburn as an old man, but it is his greatest grief to realize this will be impossible. Again, the speaker recounts images of the happy, bustling village where children came singing from school, and even the noisy watchdogs, geese, and nightingales sounded like "sweet confusion." Now, the population has been displaced, leaving behind only a feeble "wretched matron" who forages for food and cries herself to sleep each night.

Lines 137–192

The speaker recalls the village preacher. The place where his "modest mansion" once stood is now overgrown with wildflowers. He ran a "godly race" and was rewarded with a salary of £40 per year. The preacher never sought riches or fame—he only wanted to care for the wretched. He dedicated his life to easing others' pain, whether they were injured soldiers or ruined "spendthrifts." Regardless of the beggars' backgrounds, the preacher pitied and cared for them all: "He watched and wept, he prayed and felt, for all." His sermons were rousing—even fools who came to mock the church stayed to hear him. Everyone, from adults to children, longed to be near him.

Lines 193–250

Near the church was a noisy school where a stern schoolmaster ruled strictly. The speaker knew the schoolmaster well, as did the rest of the village truants. Despite the schoolmaster's stern appearance, he was kind and loved to teach. The children, in rapt attention, used to wonder how much knowledge could be crammed into one man's head. But now no one remembers the schoolmaster's wisdom. The school, once lovingly cared for with "white-washed wall" and a "nicely sanded floor," now sinks into obscurity. It lies unused and forgotten, alongside every other pleasure of the village where the barber told tales, the woodsmen swapped stories, and "coy maids" passed drinks.

Lines 251–286

The speaker knows the rich mock his nostalgia for home, but this cruelty only makes him fonder of the "simple blessings" of his "lowly" beginnings. Everyone else seems to love the "gloss of art," working hard to obtain its expensive beauty. The speaker much prefers the beautiful images of memory that "lightly ... frolic" over his "vacant mind." He goes on to blame the rich for chasing "wanton wealth," claiming their greed hastens "the poor's decay." The rich must decide where to draw the line between a "splendid," or opulent, land and a happy one. The land is rich, and men come from around the world to plunder her spoils. In doing so, the rich expand their boundaries. They push away the poor to make more room for their horses and dogs. The rich rob their neighbors of half the silk in their fields simply to make themselves another robe. The land had enough riches for everyone to enjoy, but the wealthy strip it barren for their own gain.

Lines 287–340

The speaker compares the land to a young woman who needs no "adornment" to show off her beauty. As time passes, however, the land needs such adornment to maintain its charm, but it has been betrayed. There's no way of covering up the "impotence" and "decline" of its splendors that transformed the "smiling land" into a "scourged," or tortured, place. It has been transformed from a blooming garden to a blooming grave. The speaker wonders where the poor should live if the rich push them off their native land.

Lines 341–384

The poor must travel through "dreary scenes" with "fainting steps." Eventually, they will arrive at "that horrid shore" that the speaker describes as if he were describing Hell: either some overcrowded city or some wilderness. To him, the city is a place where "birds forget to sing" and "the dark scorpion gathers death around." The speaker carefully contrasts this hellish scene with the "cooling brook" and "grassy vested green" of the village. He imagines what it might have been like for the traveling villagers to look upon their homes for the final time. He paints a heartbreaking scene of a family tearfully saying goodbye to each other.

Lines 385–430

The speaker curses luxury. People want luxury, so they leave their "pleasures" behind to seek its "insidious joy." Even as the speaker stands now, he can see "the rural virtues leave the land." He recalls days of "contented toil" and "hospitable care" when people worked hard and were kind to each other. They were pious, faithful, and loving, but now they are greedy and cruel. The speaker feels a sense of shame at the way the villagers have changed. Finally, he says goodbye to the village of his memory, with the hopes that time might "redress the rigors of the inclement clime" and bring both truth and humility back to the land.

UNIT III:

OLIVER GOLDSMITH: THE DESERTED VILLAGE

Life & Career:

Oliver Goldsmith, (born Nov. 10, 1730, Kilkenny West, County Westmeath, Ire.—died April 4, 1774, London, Eng.), Irish-born British essayist, poet, novelist, and dramatist. Goldsmith attended Trinity College in Dublin before studying medicine in Edinburgh. Settling in London, he began writing essays, some of which were collected in *The Citizen of the World* (1762). In 1764 he became an original member of Samuel Johnson's famous Club. He won a reputation as a poet with *The Traveller* (1764), confirmed by his famous pastoral elegy *The Deserted Village* (1770). *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) revealed his skill as a novelist. The charming farce *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) was his most effective play. Noted for his exceptionally graceful, lively style, Goldsmith was a friend of many literary lights of his day, who agreed that he was one of the oddest personalities of his time.

Outline of the poem:

"The Deserted Village" begins with a description of the once-charming eponymous village's former allure, including characterizations of specific people and their interactions. The town of the speaker's youth has beautiful weather, complete with a brook and expansive green space. There was a church at the top of the hill. In the trees and bushes, young lovers "whispered." The narrator emphasizes the "humble" nature of the town that seems to exude contentment. All in all, the Auburn that the speaker remembers is a nostalgic, idealized village of his youth. By line 34, however, it is clear that this is no longer the case.

The speaker then proceeds to describe the village coming into disarray. The culprit appears to be the "man of wealth and pride" who is responsible for the village's desolation. Goldsmith's narrator chastises him for his enjoyment of the resources "extorted from his fellow-creature's woe." The speaker explains how this man is responsible for forcing the village's inhabitants to go abroad to "distant climes" that are full of horrors in order to survive. He describes the process of their farewell. Now, the village is only inhabited by birds who echo out "hollow" calls. Houses have caved in. Everyone else seems to have left in pursuit of the city. Greed has propelled them forward, forever altering the fate of Auburn. The speaker notes that the peaceful, rural lifestyle has decayed.

The narrator of "The Deserted Village" claims to have been looking forward to retiring in his home of Auburn. He is saddened by the fact that this will not happen given the decrepit state of the village. He bears witness to the reality of the place, turning "past into pain." The mundane features of the town flood his memory. At one point, children merrily returned home from school. With the squawking of geese or the barking of dogs absent, the "sounds of population fail." Now, the only inhabitant of the town is an elderly "matron." She is forced to forage for food and firewood. This woman suffers in the once-great village.

The speaker recalls the preacher and the schoolmaster. He even begins to see through some of his nostalgia in a bittersweet, comical light. The poem concludes with the speaker expanding into a broader characterization of how the desire for wealth is destroying the good things in the world, as people come to value things that have no true worth and will ultimately decay. If the rich push out the poor, rural communities, where will they have left to go? Will they be left in squalor? The people of Auburn were clearly content at one point according to the narrator. He mourns their departure and the subsequent decline of the town.

Explanation:

Lines 1–34

The speaker describes Auburn, the village of his childhood. Each scene is constructed nostalgically, highlighting beauty in memory. The weather is always perfect; the people are filled with "humble happiness." The buildings are "never-failing ... busy ... and decent." He describes how everyone works hard and then enjoys their leisure time together on the rolling hills, playing sports or dancing. He also describes a heartwarming scene of young lovers flirting while a

scolding matron watches with disapproval. The nostalgic scenes end suddenly with the statement "But all these are charms are fled."

Lines 35–74

Between the cozy houses the speaker sees the effect of the "tyrant" and the "master" on the "smiling plain." In the presence of such evil, everyone has left the now-"desolate" village. The only guests are bittern birds that guard their nests with "hollow-sounding" calls. The once-cozy houses have sunken and molded. The speaker laments that the village—once filled with "bold peasantry" that was the "country's pride"—is now deserted. Everyone has left to chase wealth in the city, which the speaker calls the place where "men decay." This, the speaker claims, is where "England's griefs began." People used to be happy simply when their needs were met, but with the rise of trade people longed for opulence and "unwieldy wealth." They longed to ease "every pang that folly pays to pride." This greed caused the decay of "rural mirth and manners."

Lines 75–136

The speaker describes returning home after years away, taking "solitary rounds" amid the dangled walkways and "ruined grounds." All around him he sees evidence of "the tyrant's power." Seeing how run-down the once-beautiful village has become fills the speaker's heart with emotion. He had long wished to return to Auburn as an old man, but it is his greatest grief to realize this will be impossible. Again, the speaker recounts images of the happy, bustling village where children came singing from school, and even the noisy watchdogs, geese, and nightingales sounded like "sweet confusion." Now, the population has been displaced, leaving behind only a feeble "wretched matron" who forages for food and cries herself to sleep each night.

Lines 137–192

The speaker recalls the village preacher. The place where his "modest mansion" once stood is now overgrown with wildflowers. He ran a "godly race" and was rewarded with a salary of £40 per year. The preacher never sought riches or fame—he only wanted to care for the wretched. He dedicated his life to easing others' pain, whether they were injured soldiers or ruined "spendthrifts." Regardless of the beggars' backgrounds, the preacher pitied and cared for them all: "He watched and wept, he prayed and felt, for all." His sermons were rousing—even

fools who came to mock the church stayed to hear him. Everyone, from adults to children, longed to be near him.

Lines 193–250

Near the church was a noisy school where a stern schoolmaster ruled strictly. The speaker knew the schoolmaster well, as did the rest of the village truants. Despite the schoolmaster's stern appearance, he was kind and loved to teach. The children, in rapt attention, used to wonder how much knowledge could be crammed into one man's head. But now no one remembers the schoolmaster's wisdom. The school, once lovingly cared for with "white-washed wall" and a "nicely sanded floor," now sinks into obscurity. It lies unused and forgotten, alongside every other pleasure of the village where the barber told tales, the woodsmen swapped stories, and "coy maids" passed drinks.

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The speaker compares the land to a young woman who needs no "adornment" to show off her beauty. As time passes, however, the land needs such adornment to maintain its charm, but it has been betrayed. There's no way of covering up the "impotence" and "decline" of its splendors that transformed the "smiling land" into a "scourged," or tortured, place. It has been transformed

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The poor must travel through "dreary scenes" with "fainting steps." Eventually, they will arrive at "that horrid shore" that the speaker describes as if he were describing Hell: either some overcrowded city or some wilderness. To him, the city is a place where "birds forget to sing" and "the dark scorpion gathers death around." The speaker carefully contrasts this hellish scene with the "cooling brook" and "grassy vested green" of the village. He imagines what it might have been like for the traveling villagers to look upon their homes for the final time. He paints a heartbreaking scene of a family tearfully saying goodbye to each other.

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The speaker curses luxury. People want luxury, so they leave their "pleasures" behind to seek its "insidious joy." Even as the speaker stands now, he can see "the rural virtues leave the land." He recalls days of "contented toil" and "hospitable care" when people worked hard and were kind to each other. They were pious, faithful, and loving, but now they are greedy and cruel. The speaker feels a sense of shame at the way the villagers have changed. Finally, he says goodbye to the village of his memory, with the hopes that time might "redress the rigors of the inclement clime" and bring both truth and humility back to the land.

Critical Appreciation:

Oliver Goldsmith wrote his 431-line poem in rhyming couplets *The Deserted Village* (1770), he exhibited the talent for shrewd observation and scene for which he had gained a reputation. He also imbued this idealization of English rural life with the simplicity and unforced grace critics later found his most appealing attributes. He mingles his idealized scenes with memories of his own careless youth in Ireland. While the tone remained light, Goldsmith had a serious concern, that of the effects of the agricultural revolution, which resulted in the enclosure of arable land, often to form private parks or gardens. The Enclosure Acts caused small farmers whose families had earned their living from the land for generations to lose everything. Goldsmith’s sad vision of that displacement incorporates hyperbole, as he exaggerates the resultant migration of yeoman farmers to British cities and to America, as well as

the heartless characters of the wealthy. However, his opposition to "luxury" and support of "rural virtue" remained sincere, and his nostalgic tone results in a strong sense of longing for a lifestyle already doomed.

Goldsmith begins in a voice of praise, writing, "Sweet Auburn! Loveliest village of the plain," then praises in his second and third lines the abundance of village life, not only because it produces material results, but because it is a place "Where health and plenty cheered the laboring swain, / Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid." He adopts the figurative language of personification to demonstrate that nature proved kind to Auburn, heavily suggesting that kindness as a result of right living. The speaker notes that summer, slow to part, leaves behind many flowers that offer "lovely bowers of innocence and ease" and informs readers this was where he spent his youth. That adds an authority to the description of a place "Where humble happiness endeared each scene," Goldsmith's use of alliteration calling attention to the fact that the inhabitants were marked by humility. His selection of adjectives, as in "sheltered cot," "never-failing brook," and "decent church," all suggest the sterling character of those who reside at Auburn, as well as of nature, which supports it. Readers will later notice a marked contrast between the "laboring swain" and the aggressive, greedy individuals whom, despite laws permitting their actions, Goldsmith envisions as no better than poachers raping the land and destroying its abundance. Many of the early details support this method, suggesting contrast with the descriptions that will occur later in the poem. He concludes the first part of his poem with "These were thy charms—But all these charms are fled" in order to signal transition.

In line 36, Goldsmith adds details, which abruptly convert the positive tone to negative, balancing the opening portion. Readers learn that "sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn," that "the tyrant's hand" has invaded the bower and "desolation saddens" the green of the village. A new "master grasps the whole domain" (39), while a half-tilled field "stints" the plain. The adjectives turn dark, that rhetorical change echoing the change to Auburn. The brook is "choked"; the bittern, a local bird, is "hollow sounding"; and even the ruin done to the land is "shapeless." Conditions become so bad that "trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand, / Far, far away thy children leave the land." The personal possessive pronoun, *thy,* connotes days past and represents a reverent attitude toward that past. The accumulating wealth of the present leads to human decay. The speaker's attitude toward the encroachers is one of disdain, then warning, as he notes:

Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied. (53–56)

The speaker then calls on history to remember a time when "every rood of ground" could support a worker, requiring only "light labor" to spread the earth's bounty. Goldsmith uses repetition to good effect when he writes of the losses resulting from the arrival of "Unwieldy wealth, and cumbrous pomp":

These gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that asked but little room,
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene. (69–71)

They have all disappeared along with "rural mirth and manners."

The speaker next mourns the loss of a peaceful retirement, as his late life stage fills him with concerns. He cannot celebrate the wonderful sounds he used to love, as he recalls at evening's close,

The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung,
The sober herd that lowed to meet their young,
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children just let loose from school. (117–120)

Now "No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale" and the earth yields a fraction of the bounty it once did. The speaker feels an especial loss when he remembers the village preacher who never sought power, but rather spent his time with vagrants and beggars, considering it an honor as he "relieved their pain." He extols the virtue of this forgotten individual, remembering the great service he supplied, filling almost an additional 50 lines. This allows Goldsmith not merely to praise the preacher with gushing hyperbole, but to make his case that no such individual exists among the grasping group that displaced the preacher and those to whom he ministered. He does the same for the "village master," who "taught his little school," praising the

teacher's good humor and love of learning. A strong example of Goldsmith's exaggeration may be found in lines 213–216:

> While words of learned length, and thundering sound,
> Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;
> And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
> That one small head could carry all he knew.

The speaker next recalls "transitory splendors", including physical details about not only the village's inhabitants but also their homes, with "whitewashed wall" and "nicely sanded floor," as well as furnishings and a hearth decorated with "aspen boughs, and flowers, and fennel gay" when not being used to protect against the chill. The nostalgic tone proves touching as well as moving, causing the reader to remember his own home. Goldsmith again attacks the intruders, then calls on "Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen," who witness the change to judge which is superior, the "splendid" and "happy land" or an area to which "rich men flock from all the world around," purporting to have a wealth that

> Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
> Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
> Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds;
> The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth
> Has robbed the neighboring fields of half their growth. (276–280)

Not only have the intruders ruined the property, they have driven the rightful inhabitants away, moving the speaker to ask, "Where then, ah where, shall Poverty reside, / To 'scape the pressure of contiguous Pride?" He answers his own grim question with an equally grim reply. Some move to the city, where they find only work at a trade that cannot support them, and they suffer mightily. Others leave the country, traveling to a place inhabited only by terrors, including "blazing suns that dart a downward ray," "Matted woods where birds forget to sing / But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling;" and "the dark scorpion gathers death around." He notes the destruction to local lands but does not ask readers to interfere. Rather, he bids the scene farewell, asking that it continue to remind humans of its existence:

> Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
> Redress the rigors of the inclement clime;

And slighted truth, with thy persuasive strain
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain. (421–424)

Goldsmith's hope made clear in his last few lines is that nature itself can teach man the folly of his ways. His speaker hopes man will eventually learn that "states of native strength," although "very poor, may still be very blest" and remain far preferable to the devastation caused by the base desires of an arrogant few. Goldsmith's close friend and confidant Samuel Johnson composed the final four lines:

That Trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
As ocean sweeps the labored mole away;
While self-dependent power can time defy
As rocks resist the billows and the sky.

While Goldsmith's "Auburn" was based on his childhood home of Athlone, Ireland, Auburn was another name for Lissoy Parsonage, where he lived. *The Deserted Village* inspired the name *Auburn* for towns the world over.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY: ODE TO THE WEST WIND

Life & Career:

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born 4 August 1792 at Field Place, near Horsham, Sussex, England. The eldest son of Timothy and Elizabeth Shelley, he stood in line to inherit his grandfather's considerable estate and a seat in Parilament. He attended Eton College, where he began writing poetry, and went on to Oxford University. His first publication was a Gothic novel, *Zastrozzi* (1810), in which he voiced his own heretical and atheistic opinions through the villain Zastrozzi. After less than a year at Oxford, he was expelled for writing and circulating a pamphlet promoting atheism.

At 19, Shelley eloped to Scotland with 16-year-old Harriet Westbrook. Two years later he published his first long serious work, *Queen Mab: A Philosophical Poem*. The poem emerged from Shelley's friendship with the British philosopher William Godwin, and it expressed Godwin's freethinking socialist philosophy. Shelley also fell in love with Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft's daughter, Mary, and in 1814 they traveled to Europe. In 1815 the couple went to Lake Geneva, where Shelley spent a great deal of time with the poet Lord Byron, sailing on

Lake Geneva and discussing poetry and the supernatural late into the night. The same year, Shelley wrote the verse allegory *Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude*. In December 1816 Harriet Shelley apparently died by suicide. In a matter of weeks, Shelley and Mary Godwin were officially married.

Early in 1818, Percy and Mary Shelley left England for the last time, and went to Italy. During the remaining four years of his life, Shelley produced all his major works, including *The Masque of Anarchy*, written in response to the Peterloo Massacre of 1818, *The Cenci* and *Prometheus Unbound*. On 8 July 1822, shortly before his 30th birthday, Shelley was drowned in a storm while attempting to sail from Leghorn to La Spezia, Italy, in his schooner, the Don Juan.

Outline of the poem:

'Ode to the West Wind' was written in Cascine Woods, outside of Florence, Italy, and published in 1820. It focuses on death's necessary destruction and the possibilities of rebirth.

In this poem, *Ode to the West Wind*, Percy Shelley creates a speaker that seems to worship the wind. He always refers to the wind as "Wind" using the capital letter, suggesting that he sees it as his god. He praises the wind, referring to its strength and might in tones similar to the Biblical Psalms which worship God. He also refers to the Greek God, Dionysus. The speaker continues to praise the wind and to beseech it to hear him. When he is satisfied that the wind hears him, he begs the wind to take him away in death, in hopes that there will be a new life waiting for him on the other side.

'Ode to the West Wind' by Percy Bysshe Shelley focuses on the west wind, a powerful and destructive force, yet a necessary one.

In the first lines, the speaker addresses the wind and describes how it creates deadly storms. it drives away the summer and brings with it the cold and darkness of winter. He imagines what it would be like to be a dead leaf lifted and blown around by the wind and he implores the wind to lift him "as a wave, a lead, a cloud!" The speaker sees the wind as a necessary evil, one that eventually means that spring is on the way.

Shelley engages with themes of death, rebirth, and poetry in *'Ode to the West Wind.'* From the start, Shelley's speaker describes the wind as something powerful and destructive. It takes away the summer and brings winter, a season usually associated with death and sorrow. It's not a peaceful wind, he adds, but despite this, the speaker celebrates it. It is necessary for the circle of life to progress. Without death, there is no rebirth. The wind serves an

important role in preserving this. Poetry is one of the less obvious themes in *'Ode to the West Wind.'* The speaker seems to allude to a process of creation in the text, one that involves him personally. This might, considering the format, be the creation of poetry.

'Ode to the West Wind' by Percy Bysshe Shelley is written in terza rima. This refers to an interlocking rhyme scheme. The first stanza is written in the pattern of ABA while the second uses the same "B" rhyme sound and adds a "C." So it looks like BCB. This repeats throughout the text until the final two lines which rhyme as a couplet. Despite the pattern, there are several half0rhymes in this piece. FOr example, "everywhere" and "hear" in lines thirteen and fourteen.

The majority of *'Ode to the West Wind'* is written in iambic pentameter. This means that most of the lines contain five sets of two beats. The first of which is unstressed and the second which is stressed. This pattern does change in some lines more than others. This is particularly evident in the first stanza where all the lines are irregular.

Shelley makes use of several literary devices in *'Ode to the West Wind.'* These include alliteration, personification, and apostrophe. The latter is an interesting device that is used when the poet's speaker talks to something or someone that either can't hear them or can't respond. In this case, the speaker starts out the poem by talking to the "West Wind" as though it can do both. In addition to this, the poet also personifies the wind or gives it human abilities that forces or animals don't naturally have.

Alliteration is a common type of repetition that appears when the poet repeats the same consonant sound at the beginning of words. For example, "lie" and "low" in line one of stanza three of canto one as well as "steep sky" in stanza one of canto two.

Enjambement is another common technique. It occurs several times in *'Ode to the West Wind.'* For example, the transition between lines two and three of stanza one, canto one as well as lines two and three of stanza three, canto one.

Critical Analysis:

Canto 1

Stanza One

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

In the opening stanza of *Ode to the West Wind*, the speaker appeals to the wild West Wind. The use of capital letters for "West" and "Wind" immediately suggests that he is speaking to the Wind as though it were a person. He calls the wind the "breath of Autumn's being", thereby further personifying the wind and giving it the human quality of having breath. He describes the wind as having "unseen presence" which makes it seem as though he views the wind as a sort of god or spiritual being. The last line of this stanza specifically refers to the wind as a spiritual being that drives away death and ghosts.

Stanza Two

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

This stanza of *Ode to the West Wind* describes the dead Autumn leaves. They are not described as colorful and beautiful, but rather as a symbol of death and even disease. The speaker describes the deathly colors "yellow" "black" and "pale". Even "hectic red" reminds one of blood and sickness. He describes the dead and dying leaves as "Pestilence stricken multitudes". This is not a peaceful nor beautiful description of the fall leaves. Rather, the speaker seems to see the fall leaves as a symbol of the dead, the sick, and the dying. The wind then comes along like a chariot and carries the leaves "to their dark wintry bed", which is clearly a symbol of a grave.

Stanza Three

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

The speaker continues the metaphor of the leaves as the dead by explaining that the wind carries them and "winged seeds" to their graves, "where they lie cold and low". He then uses a simile to compare each leaf to "a corpse within its grave". But then, partway through the second line, a shift occurs. The speaker says that each is like a corpse "until" the wind comes through, taking away the dead, but bringing new life. The use of the word "azure" or blue, to describe the wind is in sharp contrast to the colors used to describe the leaves.

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Stanza Five

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and Preserver; hear, O hear!

Here, the speaker again appeals to the wind, calling it a "wild spirit" and viewing it as a spiritual being who destroys and yet also preserves life. He is asking this spirit to hear his pleas. He has not yet made a specific request of the wind, but it is clear that he views it as a powerful spiritual being that can hear him.

Canto 2

Stanza One

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like Earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Again, the speaker addresses the wind as a person, calling it the one who will "loose clouds" and shake the leaves of the "boughs of Heaven and Ocean". This reads almost as a Psalm, as if the speaker is praising the wind for its power.

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Again, the speaker refers to the wind as a spiritual being more powerful than angels, for the angels "of rain and lightening" are described as being "spread on the blue surface" of the

wind. He then describes these angels as being “like the bright hair” on the head of an even greater being.

Stanza Three

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith’s height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

In this stanza of *Ode to the West Wind*, the speaker compares the wind to a “fierce Maenad” or the spiritual being that used to be found around the Greek God, Dionysus. Remember, this is the being that was also described as having hair like angels. Thus, the wind is described as a being like a god, with angels for hair. These angels of rain and lightening reveal that a storm is on the way.

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Stanza Five

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: O hear!

The speaker then describes the wind as the bringer of death. He has already described it as the Destroyer. Here, he describes it as one who brings “black rain and fire and hail.” Then, to end this Canto, the speaker again appeals to the wind, begging that it would hear him.

Canto 3

Stanza One

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

To begin this Canto, the speaker describes the wind as having woken up the Mediterranean sea from a whole summer of peaceful rest. The sea, here, is also personified.

Stanza Two

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

With this stanza of *Ode to the West Wind*, the speaker simply implies that the sea was dreaming of the old days of palaces and towers and that he was "quivering" at the memory of an "intenser day".

Stanza Three

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

The speaker continues to describe the sea's dreams as being of slower days when everything was overgrown with blue "moss and flowers". Then, he hints that something is about to change when he mentions to Atlantic's "powers".

Stanzas Four and Five

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know
Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: O hear!

This stanza of *Ode to the West Wind* is in reference to the sea's reaction to the power of the wind. At the first sign of the strong wind, the sea seems to "cleave" into "chasms" and "grow grey with fear" as they tremble at the power of the wind. Again, this stanza reflects a Psalm in the worship of a God so mighty that nature itself trembles in its sight.

Canto 4

Stanza One

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

Here, the speaker finally brings his attention to himself. He imagines that he was a dead leaf which the wind might carry away or a cloud which the wind might blow. He thinks about what it would be like to be a wave at the mercy of the power of the wind.

Stanza Two

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O Uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The speaker stands in awe of the wondrous strength of the wind. It seems to act on "impulse" and its strength is "uncontrollable". He then mentions his own childhood.

Stanza Three

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

Here, the speaker seems to wonder whether the wind has gotten stronger since his childhood, or whether he has simply become weaker. He thinks that when he was a boy, he may have been about to "outstrip" the speed of the wind. And yet, his boyhood "seemed a vision", so distant, and so long ago. The speaker is clearly contrasting the strength of the wind to his own weakness that has come upon him as he has aged.

Stanza Four

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

Here, the speaker finally comes to his request. Until now, he has been asking the wind to hear him, but he has not made any specific requests. Now, he compares himself to a man "in prayer in [his] sore need" and he begs the wind to "lift [him] as a wave, a leaf, a cloud". He longs to be at the mercy of the wind, whatever may come of it. In the final line, he refers to himself as one who is in the final stages of his life when he says, "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed". Just like the wind swept away the dead leaves of the Autumn, the speaker calls for the wind to sweep him away, old and decaying as he is.

Stanza Five

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

The speaker says that the weight of all of his years of life have bowed him down, even though he was once like the wind, "tameless…swift, and proud".

Canto 5

Stanza One

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Again, the speaker begs the wind to make him be at its mercy. He wants to be like a lyre (or harp) played by the wind. He wants to be like the dead leaves which fall to the ground when the wind blows.

Stanza Two

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

In this stanza of *Ode to the West Wind*, the speaker asks the wind to come into him and make him alive. This is yet another reference to the wind as a sort of god. In some religions, particularly the Christian religion, there is the belief that to have a new life, one must receive the Holy Spirit into his bodily being. This is precisely what the speaker is asking the wind to do to

him. He realizes that for this to happen, his old self would be swept away. That is why he describes this as “sweet though in sadness”. But he asks the spirit of the wind to be his own spirit and to be one with him.

Stanza Three

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

The speaker asks the wind to “drive [his] dead thoughts over the universe” so that even as he dies, others might take his thoughts and his ideas and give them “new birth”. He thinks that perhaps this might even happen with the very words he is speaking now.

Stanza Four

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened Earth

The speaker asks the wind to scatter his thoughts as “ashes and sparks” that his words might kindle a fire among mankind, and perhaps awaken the sleeping earth.

Stanza Five

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

The speaker has used spiritual and biblical references throughout *Ode to the West Wind* to personify the wind as a god, but here he makes it a little more specific. When he says, “The trumpet of prophecy” he is specifically referring to the end of the world as the Bible describes it. When the trumpet of prophecy is blown, Christ is believed to return to earth to judge the inhabitants. The speaker asks the Wind to blow that trumpet. Because of the speaker’s tone throughout *Ode to the West Wind*, it would make sense if this was the speaker’s own personal trumpet, marking the end of his life. He wants the wind to blow this trumpet. With the last two lines of *Ode to the West Wind*, the speaker reveals why he has begged the wind to take him away

in death. He says, “If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?” This reveals his hope that there is an afterlife for him. He desperately hopes that he might leave behind his dying body and enter into a new life after his death.

Readers who enjoyed *‘Ode to the West Wind’* should also consider reading some of Shelley’s other best-known poems. For example, *‘Adonais,’ ‘Mutability,’* and *‘Ozymandias.‘* The latter is a very memorable poem, one that’s often studied in schools around the world. It describes a long-abandoned and broken statue in the desert, one that looks out over a domain that no longer exists. in *‘Adonais,’* Shelley writes a tribute to fellow poet John Keats who died at the age of twenty-five. In *‘Mutability,’* Shelley takes everyday elements of life, from wind, to the sky, and emotions, and compares them to human nature and the facts of life.

JOHN KEATS: LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

Life & Career:

John Keats’s poetic achievement in a span of a mere six years can only be described as astonishing. But in his own lifetime, critics came close to destroying him.

Born in London in October 1795 to a respectable London innkeeper Thomas Keats and the lively and comfortably-off Frances Jennings, he lost his father after a riding accident when he was eight, and his mother to tuberculosis when he was 14. In the summer of the same year, he was apprenticed to a surgeon neighbour of his maternal grandparents in Edmonton. In 1815 he began medical training at Guy’s Hospital. Despite qualifying, he never practised medicine, turning instead to writing poetry.

His first volume of poems, published in 1817, attracted little attention beyond the odd dismissive remark - despite including ‘On First Looking Into Chapman’s Homer’. In the same year, *Blackwood’s Magazine* published a series of reviews denouncing what it called the ‘Cockney school’: poets and essayists associated with the writer Leigh Hunt, of which Keats was one.

His long and ambitious *Endymion* (1818) fared little better critically than the 1817 volume. Nevertheless, he was encouraged by appreciative friends including Hunt, William Hazlitt and Benjamin Haydon, who classed him with Percy Bysshe Shelley as a rising genius. Between 1818 and 1819, the most fertile period of his life, he fell in love with his ‘Bright Star’ Fanny Brawne, and produced his six famous odes, and such great narrative poems as ‘Isabella, or

The Pot of Basil', 'The Eve of St Agnes', 'Hyperion', 'Lamia', and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'. Even then critical praise was grudging.

In 1820, he was, like his mother and brother Tom, fatally stricken with tuberculosis. He sailed for Italy in the hope of recovering, but died in Rome on 23 February 1821.

The second half of the century at last brought him fame, praised by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Algernon Charles Swinburne and the Pre-Raphaelites. Today he is one of the best-loved and most quoted of all English poets.

Outline of the poem:

'La Belle Dame sans Merci' is a ballad from the Romantic period. It was part of a literary movement that had arisen to counter the theories of the Age of Enlightenment – to bring back imagination, beauty, and art to a culture that had become science-based, theoretical, and realist. Romantic writers saw the violence of the French Revolution as proof of the failure of science and reason, and the suffocation of the human spirit.

Most of John Keats' prolific works were written in 1819, shortly after he met the love of his life, Fanny Brawne, and contracted a mortal disease. Keats' poems focus on a return to beauty: Greek myth, fairies, idealism, nature, and individualism are all prominent themes in not just his work, but of Romantic literature as a whole.

The first three stanzas introduce the unidentified speaker and the knight. The speaker comes across the knight wandering around in the dead of winter when "the sedge has withered from the lake/ And no birds sing." In this way, Keats depicts a barren and bleak landscape.

The knight responds to the speaker, telling him how he met a lady in the meadows who was "full beautiful, a faery's child". Here, Keats' language sweetens. The first three stanzas were bitter and devoid of emotion, but the introduction of the "lady in the meads" produces softness in the language of the knight. He reminisces on the lady's beauty and her apparent innocence – her long hair, light feet, and wild eyes – and on her otherworldliness, as well. Moreover, he describes his sweet memories of the Lady: feeding each other, giving her presents, traveling with her, and being together. In the eighth stanza, the lady weeps for she knows that they cannot be together as she is a fairy, and he is a mortal. She lulls him to sleep out of which he does not immediately wake. In his dream, the knight sees pale people like kings, princes, and warriors. They tell him that he has been enthralled by the woman without mercy. He wakes up from the nightmare alone,

on the cold hillside, and tells the persona that is why he stays there, wandering, looking for the lady. The last stanza leaves the fate of the knight ambiguous.

Critical Analysis:

Stanza One:

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,

Alone and palely loitering?

The sedge has withered from the lake,

And no birds sing.

With the opening stanza of *'La Belle Dame sans Merci,'* the speaker sets up the scene and the subject of this poem. The speaker comes upon a knight. He knows that this man is a knight upon seeing him, but he quickly reveals that this knight is not behaving as one might expect a knight to behave. The character does not seem brave and valiant. Rather, he is alone and "loitering". He seems to be wandering about aimlessly.

The speaker wonders why, and he asks. He also remarks about the time of year and claims that "the sedge has withered from the lake/ And no birds sing". Here, he is indicating that spring is over, and there is no lively singing or springtime beauty in the atmosphere. He wonders why the knight would be wandering about, pale and lonely, during this time of the year. It is probably growing cold, as the birds have flown south already. The speaker finds it concerning that this knight is sickly and alone, without shelter, at this time of the year.

It is important to note here that during the summer of 1818, Keats' younger brother Tom succumbed to tuberculosis. In the very same year, Keats began exhibiting symptoms of the disease, and thus impending death was heavy on his mind. It gets reflected in the very first stanza of the poem.

Stanza Two:

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,

So haggard and so woe-begone?

The squirrel's granary is full,

And the harvest's done.

With this stanza, the reader can grasp the full picture of what the Knight looks like. The speaker describes him as “alone”, “pale”, “haggard”, and “woe-begone”. The setting is also described. It seems that the harvest is done. Therefore, the reader can imagine the bare, dry ground and the silence of nature after the birds have already flown south. Overall, this description gives *‘La Belle Dame sans Merci’* a very gloomy tone. The subject is down-trodden, and nature itself seems stripped of all joy. The birds have ceased their singing and the squirrels have stored up enough food to go into hiding. Thus, the lonely knight is left utterly alone.

Stanza Three:

I see a lily on thy brow,

With anguish moist and fever-dew,

And on thy cheeks a fading rose

Fast withereth too.

In this stanza, the speaker informs the knight that he looks very ill. He tells him that his face is as pale as a lily and that his face looks moist with sweat as if he had a fever. All of his colors are fading quickly from his cheeks. It appears the speaker is very concerned about the knight’s health. He speaks to the knight to make sure he is aware of how ill he is. In the following stanza, the knight answers him

Stanza Four:

I met a lady in the meads,

Full beautiful—a faery’s child,

Her hair was long, her foot was light,

And her eyes were wild.

The speaker is now the knight as he gives answers to the concerns of the first speaker. He tells him of a lady that he met and describes her long hair and her light step. Her eyes were “wild”. It is clear from this stanza, that the knight fell in love at the first sight of this lady he describes. He describes her as not quite human. The knight doesn’t refer to her as fully fairy, but

he does call her a “faery’s child” which gives the reader the impression that she is at least half fairy.

Stanza Five:

I made a garland for her head,

And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;

She looked at me as she did love,

And made sweet moan

In this stanza, the knight describes his relationship with this lady. It appears that he won her heart. He made her a garland of flowers for her head. Then he made her bracelets from flowers. He also adorned her private parts with flowers. This is implied when he says that he put flowers on her “fragrant zone”. Then the knight implies that he made love to this woman. He says that “she looked at [him] as she did love” and that she made a sweet moan. This implies that the two were intimate with one another.

Stanza Six:

I set her on my pacing steed,

And nothing else saw all day long,

For sidelong would she bend, and sing

A faery’s song.

The sixth stanza can be read as an extension of the previous stanza, where the lady riding the knight’s stallion is an extended metaphor for their continued sexual relations. On the other hand, it could be read literally. In this case, the knight would have placed her on his horse and watched her ride “all day long” while she sang. In either case, the knight is so entirely absorbed with this woman that he sees and hears nothing else. He is devoted to her the entire day long.

Stanza Seven:

She found me roots of relish sweet,

And honey wild, and manna-dew,

And sure in language strange she said—

‘I love thee true’.

This stanza continues to describe the fairy woman’s supernatural qualities. She feeds him sweet roots, wild honey, and manna. The “roots of relish sweet” refer to her human qualities, but the manna and the wild honey are symbolic of her supernatural qualities. In the Jewish religion, it is told that God fed the Israelite’s bread from heaven called manna. This same God promised the Israelites a land flowing with milk and honey. Thus, the fact that the fairy-woman was able to feed him bread from heaven, wild honey, and roots suggests that the fairy is part human, part supernatural. The reference to “language strange” is yet another evidence of the lady’s unnatural lineage.

Stanza Eight:

She took me to her Elfin grot,

And there she wept and sighed full sore,

And there I shut her wild wild eyes

With kisses four.

The knight continues to describe the fairy woman’s qualities. He describes her cave, or “grot” as something elf-like in nature. Then, he gives her human characteristics once again when he says that “she wept and sighed full sore”. He does not explain why she cried, but he does imply that he wiped her tears away with his kisses. This occurs between the knight and the fairy-woman allows the reader to understand the depth of their relationship. Earlier in *‘La Belle Dame sans Merci’*, they connected physically. Here, they connect emotionally as the knight is there to wipe away her tears.

Scholars are divided on the precise motives of the lady while classes of scholars believe that the lady’s weeping in the “Elfin grot” does bring up the ideas of undivided love. Several scholars believe otherwise. However, it seems that it is the latter. The lady understands that they cannot be together, and chooses to leave him to sleep.

Stanza Nine:

And there she lullèd me asleep,

And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!—

The latest dream I ever dreamt

On the cold hill side.

With this stanza, readers can begin to feel a little uncertain about this fairy-woman. They should question why she is lulling this Knight to sleep. In the previous stanza, she cried, and there, no reason was offered for her tears. Now, she lulls him to sleep.

The knight has a dream. It is a nightmare. For in his recollection of this dream, he cries out "Ah! Woe betide!" which suggests that this dream was woeful. Then he says that this was "the latest dream I ever dreamt" which suggests that it was the last dream that he would ever dream. He does not explain how he knows that this was the last dream he would ever have, but he seems so confident of it that the reader does not question it.

Suddenly, this poem has taken a turn for the worse. Something awful has happened, and the reader can begin to understand that the fairy-woman is at fault, but there are no specifics given just yet.

Stanza Ten:

I saw pale kings and princes too,

Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;

They cried—'La Belle Dame sans Merci

Thee hath in thrall!'

At this point, the knight begins to describe the "pale kings and princes" that he saw in his dream. In this case, "pale" is a symbol of death. Since *'La Belle Dame sans Merci'* has already introduced biblical symbols of the supernatural, it is not too far-fetched to conclude that the pale warriors and princes and kings are all after the likeness of the pale horse in the book of Revelation, the final book of the New Testament. The pale horse and rider of the Bible symbolize death and bring destruction.

This poem continues to become more and more nightmarish as it continues. All of the pale kings, princes, and warriors cry out "La Belle Dame sans Merci". This, of course, is the title of the poem. It is in French, and it translates to read "The Beautiful Woman Without Mercy".

Suddenly, amid his dream, the Knight becomes aware of what is happening to him. He has been seduced by a woman who would show him no mercy. Not only that, but he is one of many who have come to ruin at the hands of this fairy-woman.

Stanza Eleven:

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

The knight comes to the full realization of what has happened to him. Every man that the fairy has ever seduced has died. He describes these dead men that were in his dream. They have "starved lips" and they looked at him "with horrid warning" but it was too late. The knight had already been seduced, and as a consequence of his moment of pleasure, he now faces death. When he awoke from his dream, he found himself "on the cold hill's side" with no fairy-woman in proximity. From the original description of the knight, the readers can conclude that he is, in fact, dying.

Stanza Twelve:

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

In the final stanza, the knight finally answers the original question of the first speaker. He claims that because of being seduced by the fairy-woman, he now sojourns "alone and palely loitering" in his near-death state. Keats ends *'La Belle Dame sans Merci'* with the line with which the first stanza ends. He repeats the first speaker's observation that "the sedge is withered from the lake/ And no birds sing".

The readers are left to grieve the loss of the knight. He dies alone with no one to comfort him in his last moments. Not even the birds are there to sing a song to offer comfort in his death. He is utterly alone in his last moments, and all because he was seduced by that beautiful fairy-woman without mercy.

Although the language used is simple, Keats manages to create two parallel universes. The real world, where the knight is found alone, and palely loitering, is dark and dismal and wintery. The other world, where the Lady lives, seems exotic and beautiful, with such glorious foods as honey wild and manna-dew. The nightmarish imagery that exists between the worlds can be taken to be part and parcel of the lady's world, as it is she who whisks young men away, willing or unwilling, to their doom.

UNIT - IV

FRA LIPPO LIPPI: ROBERT BROWNING

Life & Career:

Robert Browning was an English poet and playwright born in Camberwell, London in 1812. He was an intelligent child who was fluent in five languages by the age of fourteen. He was also passionate about poetry and was a talented musician, composing arrangements of several songs as well as writing poetry. In 1845 he met the far more established poet Elizabeth Barrett, they married secretly a year later and moved to Italy, during which time they both wrote extensively. However, his poems made little impact until 1861, when, after Elizabeth's death he returned to England. His subsequent publication *The Ring and the Book*, published in four volumes was a huge success, cementing his reputation as one of the foremost Victorian poets, alongside his wife. He died at his and Elizabeth's son's home in Venice, Italy in 1889.

Outline of the poem:

The poem begins as the painter and monk Lippo Lippi, also the poem's narrator, is caught by some authority figures while roving his town's red light district. As he begins, he is being physically accosted by one of the police. He accuses them of being overzealous and that he need not be punished. It is not until he name-drops "Cosimo of the Medici" (from the ruling family of Florence) as a nearby friend that he is released.

He then addresses himself specifically to the band's leader, identifying himself as the famous painter and then suggesting that they are all, himself included, too quick to bow down to what authority figures suggest. Now free, he suggests that the listener allow his subordinates to wander off to their own devices. Then he tells how he had been busy the past three weeks shut up in his room, until he heard a band of merry revelers passing by and used a ladder to climb down to the streets to pursue his own fun. It was while engaged in that fun that he was caught, and he

defends himself to the judgmental listener, asking "what am I a beast for?" if not to pursue his beastly appetites.

It is then that Lippo begins to tell his life story. He was orphaned while still a baby and starved until his aunt gave him over to a convent. When the monks there asked if he was willing to renounce the world in service of monk-hood, Lippo was quick to agree since renouncing the world meant a steady supply of food in the convent. He quickly took to the "idleness" of a monk's life, even at eight years old, but was undistinguished in any of the studies they had him attempt.

His one talent was the ability to recreate the faces of individuals through drawings, partially because as a starving child he was given great insight into the details that distinguished one face from another and the way those faces illustrated different characteristics. Instead of studying in the convent, he devoted himself to doodles and drawings, until the Prior noticed his talent and assigned him to be the convent's artist.

As the convent's artist, Lippo proceeded to paint a myriad of situations, all drawn from the real world. The common monks loved his work since in his artistry they could recognize images from their everyday lives. However, "the Prior and the learned" do not admire Lippo's focus on realistic subjects, instead insisting that the artist's job is not to pay "homage to the perishable clay" of flesh and body, but to transcend the body and attempt to reveal the soul. They insist that he paint more saintly images, focusing on representations of praise and saintliness instead of everyday reality.

Lippo protests to his listener that a painter can reveal the soul through representations of the body, since "simple beauty" is "about the best thing God invents." Lippo identifies this as the main conflict of his otherwise-privileged life: where he wants to paint things as they are, his masters insist he paint life from a moral perspective. As much as he hates it, he must acquiesce to their wishes in order to stay successful, and hence he must go after prostitutes and other unsavory activity, like the one he was caught involved in at poem's beginning. As a boy brought up poor and in love with life, he cannot so easily forget his artistic impulse to represent life as he sees it to be.

He then speaks to the listener about what generations of artists owe one another and how an artist who breaks new ground must always flaunt the conventions. He mentions a painter

named Hulking Tom who studies under him, who Lippo believes will further reinvent artistic practice in the way he himself has done through pursuing realism.

He poses to his listener the basic question whether it is better to "paint [things] just as they are," or to try to improve upon God's creations. He suggests that even in reproducing nature, the artist has the power to help people to see objects that they have taken for granted in a new light. He grows angry thinking of how his masters ruin the purpose of art, but quickly apologies before he might anger the policeman.

He then tells his listener about his plan to please both his masters and himself. He is planning to paint a great piece of religious art that will show God, the Madonna, and "of course a saint or two." However, in the corner of the painting, he will include a picture of himself watching the scene. He then fantasizes aloud how a "sweet angelic slip of a thing" will address him in the painting, praising his talent and authorship, until the "hothead husband" comes and forces Lippi to hide away in the painting. Lippo bids goodbye to his listener and heads back home.

Critical Analysis:

"Fra Lippo Lippi" stands as one of Browning's most sophisticated dramatic monologues because it works on so many different levels. It is a discourse on the purpose of art, on the responsibility of the artist, the limits of subjectivity, the inadequacy of moral shapes and strictures, and lastly a triumph of dramatic voice.

Browning was inspired to write this poem after reading about Filippo Lippi in Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*, a compendium of Renaissance painters. Vasari identifies Lippi as the first realist painter, and Browning was attracted to the idea of Lippi being a ground breaker in terms of artistic style. At the time Lippi was painting, art was expected to conform to certain religious principles and to pursue shadowy, moral forms rather than delve into the intricacies of life as it is. Browning would have been attracted to this idea as a writer of complicated psychology in the midst of the Victorian era, which again pushed the idea that art should have a moral purpose.

Probably the most resonant theme in the poem is Lippo's dialectic on the purpose of art. Basically, his dilemma comes down to two competing philosophies: where he wants to paint life as it is, thereby revealing its wondrous complexity, his superiors want him to paint life through a moral lens, to use his painting as an inspirational tool. Lippo proposes in several places the

importance of "realism" as a painting style. The best argument for it can be found in the speaker himself, who frequently reveals his love of life. Notice the many times he breaks into song in the poem, which suggests his whimsical nature. His ability to use details in characterizing people (like when he talks of begging from a variety of different individuals) shows that he has an eye for the myriad distinctions in the world. As a realist, Lippo believes art should aspire to capture the beauty God has made in hopes of evoking responses from its audience. Further, he suggests that humans have a tendency to overlook the details of their lives, to ignore "things we have passed perhaps a hundred times." When a painter presents the same objects through art, a person is able to suddenly appreciate them in a new light, therefore appreciating God's beauty as it was meant to be appreciated. As evidence of the effectiveness of his philosophy, Lippo cites the common monks who loved his paintings and enjoyed recognizing their world in his depictions.

As a counter to this philosophy, Lippo's superiors believe art should "instigate to prayer." They eschew anything that reminds the viewer of the body, instead insisting that art should represent the soul and thereby inspire man to be better than he is. The Prior needs art to remind man of his religious instincts, suggesting that anything that focuses on the body must be impure. Lippo wants to reveal the irony of this philosophy – he suggests that trying to improve on God's beauty (which he captures through realism) is antithetical to the purpose of trying to bring an audience closer to God. He suggests time and time again that because life is full of complexity, contradiction, and wonder, representing it as it is will only stress those qualities, whereas the attempt to "transcend" through art will ironically simplify art into a pure, moral purpose that encourages people to "fast next Friday." Lippo asks, "What need of art at all?" if its purpose is merely to encourage piety. When Lippo paints a saint, he paints a saint, not what the saint represents, since in attempting to do the latter, he would no longer capture the contradictions and intricacies of the saint.

The poem also considers an artist's responsibility, especially when he is doing something new (as Browning certainly thought he was doing with his own work). When Lippo lists as some of his sample subjects "the breathless fellow at the altar-foot/Fresh from his murder," the irony of a murderer in church calls to mind some of Browning's dramatic monologues like "Porphyria's Lover." The poem ultimately suggests that an artist must be responsible to only one thing: himself. Lippo paints as his masters demand because he must survive, and he learned early on in life that by pretending to be something, he could stay fed instead of remaining hungry. In the

same way that he pretended to renounce the world to get bread, so does he continue to paint in a way he does not admire, all the while growing bitter that he is not adequately expressing his view that good painting should evoke questions and wonder. When he sketches his plan for a final painting at the end of the poem, he is expressing an idea of how to feed both desires: he will paint what the Church wants but also include himself, thereby making a subversive comment and negating the moral purpose for which the painting ostensibly is meant.

It is in terms of this idea that the poem has a bigger purpose than just being about art. Instead, it contemplates the limits of subjectivity. Basically, what Lippo's masters want is for him to attempt a holy subjectivity, to capture the essence of his subjects rather than their objective facts (which are defined by their specific physical characteristics, for instance). This would conform to the Romantic tradition of poetry in which Browning writes; by focusing on the subjective experience of nature, a Romantic poet aims to transcend its physical limitations and reveal something greater. Browning, who was often criticized for his objective focus on trying to represent characters outside his own mind rather than "putting himself" into a poem, is making a challenge to this criticism. Lippo wants us to see that his impulse to paint 'objectively' – to paint the world as it appears – does not necessarily mean he eschews this subjective transcendence. One can capture the subjective wonder of life by painting the objective, because it is only through the body that we can even attempt to glimpse the soul. He suggests that attempting to paint the 'subjective' is to guess at God's meaning, when God has only given us the objective. In essence, what Lippo (and Browning) are saying is that to reproduce the world as he sees it is always to be both objective and subjective. By extension, Browning suggests that, for example, the duke in "My Last Duchess" indeed represents Browning himself, as well as humankind in general. However, Browning can go no further than representing psychological realism as he observes it, because to pretend to have a facility for that is to be dishonest – all we have are our eyes and senses, and an artist should revel in the freedom and wonder of that. The mention of Hulking Tom only suggests that artists should be ground breakers – in the same way Lippo has moved art to a new place, so will Hulking Tom, for the world changes and artists need to continually mark those changes without having to conform to illogical demands.

However, what really pushes an artist away from this recognition are moral expectations and strictures, which this poem criticizes in Browning's usual ironic fashion. The scene in which Lippo is first brought to the convent is hilarious. As he stuffs his mouth full of bread, the "good

fat father" asks the 8-year-old boy if he will "quit this very miserable world?" Having known the pains of near-starvation, the boy knows better than the "fat father" the pains of the world, but is taking great joy in the simplicity of bread. He ironically promises to renounce the world so that he can easily taste the world's riches through a life of monastic "idleness," and this irony is reflected in the demands the Prior will later make of Lippo's paintings. The Prior wants Lippo to continually renounce the world in his art, to ignore the body in favor the soul, but all the while we are to remember that this is a silly irony. When the Prior suggests that art should inspire people to pray, to fast, and to fulfill their religious duties, there is an implication of a hierarchy that must be maintained by stressing those duties, all of which has to do with the material and physical world. These moral expectations are encouraged because they maintain the material world's chain of command, and for an artist like Lippo, such a philosophy is necessarily a limitation on art.

It is for these reasons that Lippo encourages the police prelate to let him go. He stresses that they, as subordinates to superiors, should not simply enforce laws because those laws exist, but instead should recognize that man is a "beast" with beastly (sexual) desires. It is easy to see in Lippo's defense an amusing attempt to rationalize his release, but it also ties into the poem's main themes.

Ultimately, the poem is most effective in its masterful use of voice. Written in blank verse, it attempts to capture the rhythms of human speech rather than conforming to any strict poetic meter. Lippo's objective in the early part of the poem is simply to be released, and he accomplishes this through his humorous name-dropping and defenses of his behavior. However, he quickly falls into his life story, which suggests the extent of his psychological repression. There is obviously nothing this simple policeman can do to help Lippo's situation, but his insistence on speaking at such length to the man only stresses how terribly he has been caught in a system unable to reveal his unique gifts. In a sense, Browning's use of voice makes Lippo's point: by objectively capturing a character outside of himself, Browning is able to engage in his own subjective hang-ups and fascinations about art, life, and humanity. To paint a man as he might be (as Browning has done with Lippo), with his imperfections intact, is to suggest wonderful possibilities.

Finally, the poem's final image offers a great allegory worthy of dissection. As mentioned above, Lippo's inclusion of his own image in an otherwise pious painting merely stresses the

unavoidable collision between subjectivity and objectivity. He will give them what they want but surreptitiously put himself in it anyway. The woman who praises him is often linked to the muse, she who revels in his ability to push boundaries and capture inspiration. From this perspective, the "hothead of a husband" must be the world and its moral strictures, coming in to force the muse to stay within the lines. Interestingly enough, when this conflict happens, Lippo hides himself behind a bench to watch it play out, suggesting that it is this very conflict – between unfettered artistry and the demands of the world – that fuel an artist's creativity. Once the fight between husband and angel is complete, Lippo will have seen enough turmoil to have inspired his next painting.

THE LOTUS EATERS: ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

Life & Career:

Alfred Lord Tennyson was born August 6th, 1809, at Somersby, Lincolnshire, fourth of twelve children of George and Elizabeth (Fytche) Tennyson. The poet's grandfather had violated tradition by making his younger son, Charles, his heir, and arranging for the poet's father to enter the ministry. (See the Tennyson Family Tree.) The contrast of his own family's relatively straitened circumstances to the great wealth of his aunt Elizabeth Russell and uncle Charles Tennyson (who lived in castles!) made Tennyson feel particularly impoverished and led him to worry about money all his life. He also had a lifelong fear of mental illness, for several men in his family had a mild form of epilepsy, which was then thought a shameful disease. His father and brother Arthur made their cases worse by excessive drinking. His brother Edward had to be confined in a mental institution after 1833, and he himself spent a few weeks under doctors' care in 1843. In the late twenties his father's physical and mental condition worsened, and he became paranoid, abusive, and violent.

Tennyson suffered from extreme short-sightedness — without a monocle he could not even see to eat — which gave him considerable difficulty writing and reading, and this disability in part accounts for his manner of creating poetry: Tennyson composed much of his poetry in his head, occasionally working on individual poems for many years. During his undergraduate days at Cambridge he often did not bother to write down his compositions, although the Apostles continually prodded him to do so. (We owe the first version of "The Lotos-Eaters" to Arthur Hallam, who transcribed it while Tennyson declaimed it at a meeting of the Apostles.) Long-

lived like most of his family (no matter how unhealthy they seemed to be) Alfred, Lord Tennyson died on October 6, 1892, at the age of 83.

Outline of the poem:

The poem begins with the Odysseus pointing a finger towards the land that was seemingly the mariners' destination. This gesture on the part of Odysseus functions not just as a direction for guidance, but also infuses them with optimism regarding reaching their target, from which they have deviated being drawn towards the "land of streams," which profoundly affected their intellect. The mariners reach a land "in which it seemed always afternoon," because of its surrounding peaceful and languid atmosphere; no action was seen in this land, that could define time or vice-versa. The lethargic air is seen to draw the individuals here in a state of trance. It seemed as though it was in a weary dream. The mariners are spoken as being greeted by the " mild-eyed melancholy Lotus-eaters," whose dark faces appear pale against the rosy sunset.

These Lotus-eaters offer the flower and fruit of the lotus to Odysseus's mariners, who on its consumption loosen their intellectual capacity, and is deviated into a feeling of deep sleep. Sitting upon the yellow sand of the island, they loosen their sense of perseverance, and at the same time, fail to perceive their fellow mariners speaking to them; they can now hear the music of their heartbeat. Instead of continuing their journey towards their home, they prefer to stay in this languid land.

The other part of the poem, Choric Song, is an expression of the mariners' resolution to stay in this utopian land forever. They praise the sweet and lethargic music of the land, comparing it with that of petals, dew, granite, and tired eyelids. Further, they interrogates as to why man is destined to toil and suffer, unlike everything else in the nature that enjoys the capacity to rest and stay still. Man's inner spirit answers him with an optimistic approach, saying that it is the tranquility and calmness that offers joy and that man is fated to toil and wander along throughout his lifetime. In the following stanza, there is seen a declaration from the mariners, who speaks about the natural tendency, according to which everything in nature is allowed a lifespan during which it can bloom and fade. To illustrate this point, he gives the example of the "folded leaf," that turns yellow with time and eventually dies, and that of the "full-juiced apple," that ultimately drops down to the earth once it ripens.
In the very next lines, the mariners question the very purpose of a life of labor since nothing on

this earth continues to live forever without coming to a final end. He asserts that every accomplishment on the part of human beings leads nowhere; nothing remains cumulative. And this is so because death is made to be the final destination.

Seeing everything as futile, the mariners desire for a long rest or death because they believe that either of them would free them from a life of endless labor. In the next stanza, however, they are seen to echo back their optimistic appeal to luxurious self-indulgence. They wonder how sweet it would be to life a life of continuous dream, where they could enjoy their sleep, dream, and the lotus fruit without any interruptions made by external pressures. They believe that such an existence could provide them the peaceful capacity to remember their loved ones who no longer exists in their life; this state would bring them closer to their cremated beloveds.

Their inertia to remain in this land strengthens with their view that their returning home would only create confusion in the family; and this is so because they perceive that their family must have forgotten them in these ten years of their absence, being out on a fight in Troy, and sons must have inherited their property. They infer that their return would only create hassle among the peaceful lives of family members. The seventh stanza echoes the first and the fifth, with the mariners speaking in favor of the life among the pleasant sights and sounds of the island. The concluding stanza closes with the mariners' vow to spend the remaining part of their lives in this "hollow Lotus land." Their inclination to be close to their natural instincts and enjoy nature wins over the external forces that drive a man away from nature.

Critical Analysis:

"The Lotus Eaters" is an intriguing poem through which Tennyson seems to create an existential awareness. At the same time, the mariners show their attributes towards life; seeing the futility of human struggle, they wish for a life of languor. Heroic achievements, epistemic growth, and intellectual pursuits are reduced to ineffectual, futile things in the course of the poem. Though the choric song reflects such a philosophy, the poet can be understood as making an attempt to echo the opposite through these understatements, especially when he recapitulates the idea of sameness screenching 'boredom' and the qualities of a monotonous sterile subsistence.

The Lotus Eaters: Central Idea

By providing a tempting and seductive vision of life from toil, Tennyson in the poem attempts to establish the nature of human life, which is predestined to be spent with labor and pain. Though the mariners, here, crave for a dream-like existence, the poet's intention could be seen as its opposite, that which can be echoed from his another poem, "Ulysses," wherein he exerts the real motto with which one could lead a meaningful life: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

The Lotus Eaters: Tone

The poem begins with a sluggish tone since the mariners are seen deviating from their real purpose of returning to their homelands. It ends with a similar tone, with them having an inclination towards a dream-like existence. The natural beauty is appraised from the very beginning till the concluding stanza. Arthur Henry Hallam defines this kind of poetry as "picturesque," as combining visual impressions in such a way that they create a picture that carries the dominant emotion of the poem.

The mellifluous lyric "The Lotus Eaters" can be seen as an aesthetic verse that portrays the lifespan of a mortal man who has to live his life with labor, pain, and happiness. The poem can even be read as a dramatization of the modern man's psyche, which tends to incline towards enjoying his life without a purpose. At the same time, it represents the lost fervor towards one's existence when one attains old age.

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THE FORSAKEN MERMAN: MATTHEW ARNOLD

Life & Career:

Matthew Arnold was an English poet and cultural critic, whose work remains amongst the best known of 19th century British poetry. Though he wrote on a variety of subjects, he is best known for his themes of nature, modern society, and moral instruction. Arnold was born to Thomas and Mary Pensworth Arnold in Laleham, England. When Matthew was young, Thomas was named headmaster of the famed Rugby School, and moved his family to Rugby, England to

take residence. In 1836, Arnold was sent to Winchester College, but eventually returned to the Rugby School, where he studied under his father. He won multiple prizes there, for English essay writing and for Latin and English poetry.

Arnold had a distinguished career as a student and professional. In 1841, he began studying at Balliol College, Oxford on an open scholarship. His father died in 1842 of heart disease, and his family then moved permanently to their vacation home, Fox How. He graduated Oxford with a 2nd class honors degree in Literae Humaniores, or what we now know as Classics. He went on to teach briefly at Rugby, then was elected Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. In 1847, he was named Private Secretary to Lord Lansdowne, Lord President of the Council. After being appointed in 1851 as an inspector of schools, Arnold married Frances Lucy and had six children.

However, Arnold's greatest work was as a writer. Though he published his his first book of poetry, *The Strayed Reveler*, in 1849, his literary career really took off in 1852, when he began to publish more poetry volumes. His second volume included a verse drama, *Empedocles on Etna*, though he garnered the most attention for the poetry which he continued to write until his death. Additionally, Arnold was well known as a cultural critic, publishing volumes like *Culture and Anarchy*, in 1869. Today, his work as critic is as well-known as his poetry is.

Throughout this phase of his life, Arnold found great success as a writer. He was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1857, and re-elected in 1862. Further, he toured both the United States and Canada on the lecture circuit. In 1883, he was elected as a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Arnold died suddenly in 1888 of heart failure, while rushing to catch a tram. His work has remained popular and loved since his death.

Outline of the Poem:

The first stanza consists of nine lines. In this stanza, the merman tells his children to move away from the shore back to their habitation in the depths of the sea. His fellow mermen are calling out to them to return, he says. Tumultuous winds have started blowing over the shore, and the high tide is separating land from sea with the fierceness it is creating in the waves. The “wild white horses” that were galloping on the shore risk being swept away in this stormy weather. The merman then proceeds to lead his children toward his home, pointing the way out to them.

The second stanza consists of six lines. In this stanza, we are first introduced to an absent female figure, for the merman entreats his children to call out to her just once before they begin

their journey homeward. Then we come to know that the absent woman's name is Margaret, for the merman is sure that if the children call out to her by that name, she will be able to recognize their voices. Finally, we realize that Margaret is actually the merman's wife because he tells his children that their mother is very fond of their voices and will surely return if she hears them.

The third stanza consists of seven lines. In this stanza, the merman tells his children that their mother will not be able to bear the pain in their voices as they entreat her to come and will surely listen to their appeal. The children must call out to her once before leaving and tell her that they will be unable to wait for her on the shore any longer, for the weather has gotten altogether unbearable, as one can see from the fretting of the horses on the shore. Then, in a gesture of desperation, he himself calls out to his wife by her name twice.

The fourth stanza consists of seven lines again. Continuing with the forsaken merman explanation, the merman urges his children to stop calling out to Margaret and start on their way home. They must glance only one last time at the white walls of the buildings in town and the diminutive grey church that stands at one end of it on the shore. Seeming to give up hope, he tells his children that their mother will not appear even if they keep calling her name the entire day.

The fifth stanza consists of eighteen lines. In this stanza, the merman asks his children whether it was yesterday when they had heard the bells of the church ringing as they were resting in their caverns beneath the sea. He then goes on to describe the tranquillity of those caverns, saying that they are embedded with soft sand and are both cool and deep within. The lights from the shore almost die out by the time they reach the caverns. However, this low light creates a magical effect as the seaweeds sway in time with the current of the water. Sea-beasts live all around the caverns and feast on the slime on the seafloor. Sea snakes are visible as they coil and uncoil themselves. So are whales, which seem never to sleep but rather to keep swimming continuously till they traverse all the seas and oceans of the earth. The stanza ends with the merman once again asking if it was yesterday that the musical sounds of the bell were heard by them all.

The sixth stanza consists of sixteen lines. Here the merman continues questioning his children and asks whether it was yesterday when their mother had left. He starts reminiscing about how Margaret used to spend her time on "a red gold throne in the heart of the sea," with their youngest child seated on her lap. In fact, it was this child's hair that she was combing when

she heard the bells of the church, sighed, and said that she must go there, where her kinsmen are all praying, since Easter is on its way, and if she doesn't pray, then she will lose her soul. In reply, the merman had told her to go up to the church, finish her prayer, and return swiftly to the underwater caverns where they stayed. She had left with a smile, but he couldn't remember where it was from yesterday. His grief over the absence of his wife has made him lose track of time, so much so that he can't recall how long she has been gone.

The seventh stanza consists of twenty-one lines. Here the merman asks the next logical question to his children – whether they have been living without Margaret for a long time or not. The smaller children start to moan about how stormy the sea is getting. He then urges his children again to get going, saying that the prayers of human beings must take a long time indeed. He recalls how they had started the day walking up the beach till they reached the town on its shore. The narrow paths leading to the church (which was at an elevated location) were deserted. From inside the church, they could hear people praying, but they did not go in. Instead, they went to the cemetery behind the church and stood on the gravestone to look into the church through its windowpanes. They saw their mother sitting by the pillar, and the merman called out to her, asking her to hasten to the place where they were all waiting for her, for the smaller children were growing anxious about the stormy weather. He himself felt that they had been away from her for a very long time. However, Margaret was staring into the Bible so intently that she overlooked the merman. The priest was praying loudly, and the door remained closed. This is why he has been telling his children to stop calling out to their mothers and to begin their journey back home.

The eighth stanza consists of twenty-three lines. In this stanza, the merman tells his children that they must go down to the sea, for their mother appears to be happy on land as she sits and the spinning wheel and sings joyfully about all that she sees in the human world. However, that note of mirth is not pure. As the spindle of her wheel drops down to the ground, and she stoops to pick it up, for a moment, she gazes longingly out of the window at sea, and as she remembers her husband and children, she sighs and sheds tears.

The ninth stanza consists of sixteen lines. Here the merman tells his children that when the evening falls, their mother will be able to hear the storm – the gusts of wind and the roar of the waves. From their dwelling beneath the sea, they will also be able to see the light from the shore shimmering on the surface of the water, making it take on the hues of amber and pearl.

However, by then, the gap will have gotten too large to bridge, and a prophetic voice will say that since their mother has been faithless, she will never be able to return, and they – the kings of the sea – will live alone forever.

The tenth and final stanza consists of twenty lines. Here the merman tells his children that at midnight, the violent winds will subside, the moon will come out from behind the clouds, low tide will set in, the "sweet air" from grassy areas will blow over the sea, and the rocks will cast their shadow on the sand. At that time, they will again make the long journey into town and towards the church. While returning from there, they will sing about how a loved one of theirs lives in that town but that she has been cruel enough to leave the kings of the sea alone forever. I hope you enjoyed reading the summary of The Forsaken Merman. If you're interested in going through the *critical analysis of The Forsaken Merman*, we have got that covered as well.

Critical Analysis:

"Nothing in Arnold's verse is more arresting than its elegiac element", rightly observes Hugh Walker, The Forsaken Merman is among Arnold's celebrated elegiac poems which were published in his first volume of poems. The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems(1849). Though Arnold has come to be best known for his meditative poems on Victorian life and times, his early poetry shows that he was a wonderful teller of tales. The Forsaken Merman is such a poignant tale told in verse.

The poem is in the form of a monologue delivered by a merman, who has been deserted by his human wife. The woman had married him, had children by him, and enjoyed all the comforts and luxury of his submarine home. She had been a happy mother and a good wife until she heard the church bell ring during Easter and felt restless. She then left her husband and her children to join her kinsmen in prayers lest she would lose her soul and returned no more to her family.

The merman along with their children waited on the seashore with the fond hope that "Surely she will come again!" he makes a passionate appeal to her to return: "Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here!

Dear heart", I said, "We are long alone;

The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."

But they wait in vain as she lives happily with her kinsmen, though perhaps shedding tears for her deserted children. So the forsaken merman along with the children returns to their under-water home singing sadly.

“There dwells a loved one,

But cruel is she!

She left lonely forever

The kings of the sea.””

The seemingly simple story behind The Forsaken Merman is actually multi-layered. No matter what Arnold writes, he cannot avoid making a direct or implicit criticism of his contemporary times. The merman’s existence at the depths of the sea, away from the human township, is meant to be a symbol for an earlier, pagan lifestyle in which life was led peacefully without the interference of any organized religion. The sound of the bells has prompted the woman to depart. Thus the poem contrasts the vitality of paganism against drab Christianity,

The two worlds are so separated from one another that by going on land once the woman is no more able to return to the caverns of the sea, where the merman and their children live. Once the world has accepted Christianity, it can no longer go back to the simple pagan ways. Therefore. The Forsaken Merman may be taken as Arnold’s critique of Christianity, and the adverse effects that he believed it was having on the Victorian people.

Mathew Arnold was greatly disturbed by the loss of religious faith as a result of the advance of the scientific spirit. “The Forsaken Merman’ is pervaded with a deep note of sadness and an intense feeling of nostalgia for the lost happiness. The merman fondly recalls his happy days in the company of his wife but knows that he will have to live as a prisoner of his memories. The poem has a haunting charm because of its thought and music. The ‘wild white horses’ signifies the huge white waves indicating a coming storm while the ‘champ and the chafe’ signifies the hiss and foam at the mouth of the shore.

Arnold does not follow any consistent rhyme scheme throughout the ten stanzas of “The Forsaken Merman’. The abundance of end rhymes gives the poem light and cheerful tone that belies its melancholy subject matter but offers a good reading experience, Arnold was

considerably influenced by Coleridge in composing the poem, as Gottfried says, “Arnold had studied the metrics of Christabel and the sea-imagery of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

Arnold has infused deep human feelings into the poem. The metrical flow of the verse hauntingly suggests the emotions of love, disillusionment, and frustration. There is a mournful note that informs the whole poem. The woman’s desertion is like the desertion of faith. Like the Victorian man lamenting the disappearance of religious faith, the merman laments his wife’s faithlessness.

UNIT – V

THE WINDHOVER: TO CHRIST OUR LORD: GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

Life & Career:

Gerard Manley Hopkinswas born on 28th July 1844 at Stratford in Essex, a child of Manley Hopkins and his wife Catherine (Smith). He was educated at Highgate school and Oxford university. At first he thought of becoming an artist like two of his brothers but his interest changed to languages and poetry. He became a Roman Catholic and joined the Jesuit order of the Society of Jesus. In 1877 he was ordained priest and studied or taught in Wales and at Stonyhurst college in Lancashire.

Many of his poems were sonnets and his best known poem is probably *The Wreck of the Deutschland,* inspired by the ship of this name which sank in 1875 with some nuns aboard. He held the chair of Greek and Latin at University College Dublin where he died on 8th June 1889 of typhoid fever. His grave is in the Jesuit plot at Glasnevin. His friend Robert Bridges published an edition of his poems in 1918 but Hopkins was not really recognised as a major poet until the 1960s.

Outline of the poem:

"The Windhover" is a sonnet written in 1887 by the English poet and Jesuit priest Gerard Manley Hopkins, dedicated to "Christ our Lord." In the poem, the speaker recounts the awe-inspiring sight of a kestrel (a.k.a, a "windhover") soaring through the air in search of prey. The speaker is deeply moved by the bird's aerial skill—its ability to both hover in stillness and swoop down with speed—and sees the bird as an expression of the beauty and majesty of God's creation. The poem's octet (the first eight lines) concentrates primarily on the bird, while the

sestet—the second and final section of the poem—discusses the creature in a wider religious context. The speaker ultimately stresses that such beauty is in fact "no wonder," because *all* of God's creation is divinely beautiful.

This morning I was lucky enough to see a flying falcon, which seemed to me to be the morning's favorite creature, a prince of daylight with speckled feathers. He was riding the rolling air currents way up high. He seemed full of pure joy as he controlled the wind like a horse-rider does a horse. After hovering almost motionless, the bird suddenly dove in a smooth arc, like that of a skater's heel cleaning sweeping across the ice. The way the bird dove and glided revealed its authority over the strong wind. Watching the bird moved me profoundly—the bird's flight evidence of its sheer mastery and achievement!

All these different attributes meet together in this bird—beauty, honor, action, air and feathers all in one! But your fire, Christ, burns even more brightly, powerfully, and beautifully. Oh Christ, my knight in shining armor!

The bird was nothing special when you really think about it—even hard and boring work like plowing a field makes the upturned soil glitter and shine beautifully. And hot coals, fallen from a fire my lord, break open to reveal their beautiful red and golden colors.

“The Windhover” is a celebration—even, perhaps, a kind of joyous prayer—that marvels at the wonders of the natural world and, in turn, at the majesty of God’s creation. The poem strives to show that these two aspects of the world—nature and God—are not really separate: the beauty of nature is both evidence of and a way of experiencing God’s sublime divinity.

The poem uses one small part of the nature—a falcon (specifically a kestrel)—to explore this relationship, with “the achieve of [and] the mastery” of the bird representing one small but undeniable proof of God’s power. The first chunk of the poem brings nature to life on the page, while the latter half then develops the way that natural beauty relates to God.

In the octet (the poem's first eight lines) the poem’s speaker is almost overcome by the beauty of the falcon. The poem’s language is fittingly full of its own dazzling beauty here (through poetic techniques like alliteration), as the speaker tries breathlessly to capture the experience of the falcon. Indeed, the emotional impact of this encounter is clear from the start: “I caught this morning morning’s minion,” the speaker says. If part of the speaker’s wonder at the falcon is its sheer and beautiful physical efficiency, the notion of “catching” it in flight shows that this is a rare—and profound—experience.

The speaker then marvels at different features of the falcon, each one of them majestic in its own way. The falcon's "dapple[d]" feathers, its ability to smoothly hover in the strong air currents, the way it swiftly turns and dives (presumably to catch prey)—all of these affect the speaker profoundly. This emotional reaction comes about because the speaker sees in the falcon—in its incredible *falcon-ness* (that is, the way it perfectly inhabits *being* a falcon)—as proof of God's existence, beauty, and power.

In other words, the falcon doesn't just exist for the sake of it—it exists to *express* God's will. The falcon's incredible aerial ability and seemingly perfect (divine) design stands in for God's masterful achievement in creating the world and all the beauty contained within it.

With the first part of the poem having proved the beauty of the falcon, the sestet (the final six lines of the sonnet) places the bird in a wider and arguably more mysterious context. The speaker admires the falcon's "brute beauty and valour and act" (its fearlessness and physical abilities), but importantly sees these as proof of a type of metaphorical "fire" that also "breaks" from Christ, to whom the poem is dedicated. This fire is God's creation. Think about it as a kind of molten lava flowing underneath the surface of all (seemingly individual) things—and making them part of one perfect whole. The fire, according to the speaker, is the source of all existence and is stunningly beautiful.

And it's here the speaker makes the poem's final but crucial point. This "fire" isn't just perceptible in things that are obviously beautiful and impressive (like the bird, or, perhaps, a spectacular view); the fire of creation burns brightly within *all* things. Like embers fallen from a fire, even unremarkable surroundings can contain intense, "gold-vermillion" beauty. As an example, the speaker mentions the mundane and repetitive task of plowing the soil, which brings the reward of food and sustenance. A secondary, less literal meaning of this "sheer plod" could be the way that human beings serve God by staying true to their spiritual development. That is, even if the rewards of doing so don't seem immediately obvious, or if the spiritual path seems fraught with difficulty, sheer effort forms an important part of the expression of God's creation. Like the falcon's full-hearted expression of *falcon-ness*, humans serve God through seeking him.

Critical Analysis:

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-

dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding

Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding

High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing

In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,

As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding

Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding

Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of; the mastery of the thing!

In the poem, *The Windhover*, the poet has caught sight of the falcon who is described as morning's favorite bird, and as the dauphin or crown prince of the kingdom of daylight. The falcon is drawn from his resting place or abode by the dapple-coloured dawn. The poet sees the bird as best-riding the air beneath him like a skillful horseman controlling his horse. The air is at once rolling and yet level and steady beneath the bird, as he rides high and erects like a horseman in the saddle.

The bird circles in the air, as though controlling his movement in the wind after the manner of a trainer "ringing on the rein" of a wild horse. The bird pivots round on the tip of his extended wing, which is described as "wimpling", that is, rippling like a nun's wimple in movement. At this moment of conflict with the pressure of the wind, the bird feels ecstasy and sweeps off in the direction of the wind as though on a swing. This movement of the bird also reminds the poet of a skillful skater, sweeping round smoothly "on a bow-bend", that is while cutting a figure of eight on the ice.

The movement combines "hurl" or strong self-propulsion, with "gliding" or full utilization of the wind's force. The skill of the bird thus seems to rebuff the wind, that is, to win a triumph over the wind. This triumph of the mind over matter inwardly stirs the heart of the poet "in hiding".

The words "In hiding" may refer to the poet's timidity or it may refer to the heart's being hidden with Christ in God and thus leading a hidden religious life. The poet's heart is thrilled with admiration for the bird-for the bird's achievement in triumphing over the inanimate forces of Nature. The "heart in hiding" may also refer to the fact that the poet watches the bird from some hidden place, or to the fact that the heart is hidden within the body. Moreover, the words "here buckle" mean that the various qualities mentioned by the poet combine or fuse together in

the falcon. “Here” = in the bird. “Buckle” = combine together. But there is another meaning also of “Here buckle”. The “heart in hiding” is being urged to make a complete surrender of itself to Christ.

> Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
> Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
> Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!
> No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
> Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
> Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermillion.

The poet, through the above lines, sums up the qualities of the falcon-brute, beauty, valour, “act”, pride, plume. All these qualities combine together in the falcon. The poet tells his heart to surrender itself completely to Christ. Through such a self-surrender the poet would see splendour in the falcon which is a billion times lovelier than is visible at a superficial view. The spiritual fire which the poet would behold is a billion times lovelier than the “brute beauty” of the falcon, and yet “more dangerous” also as it would make the poet a more devoted servant of Christ—because service has its hazards as well as rewards. There is nothing surprising in all this, the poet says and goes on to give us two examples from common experience:

- There mere plodding of ploughman as he pushes his plough down the “sillion” or furrow produces a brightness on his ploughshare. In the same way, fidelity in religious life (just as Christ compared the religious life to taking up the plough) produces brightness in the soul.
- The embers of a fire may appear to be dying; they may look bleak in their faded blue colour; but it is precisely then that these embers fall and bruise themselves, so that they break open and reveal a hidden fire of “gold vermilion”. The poet’s soul, too, is “blue-bleak” or seemingly lifeless. But through suffering and mortification for the sake of Christ, the poet would experience a spiritual glory.

Such was the close-knit character of Hopkin’s sensibility that the imagery in many of his poems is recurrent. A relatively small number of themes and images permits him an extremely varied range of treatment. The full impact of The Windhover can be felt only if we are

conversant with the imagery employed in some of his other poems. For example; the paradox of "sheer plod makes plough down sillion/shine is brightly illuminated in the poem. That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire. Contemplating his "joyless days, dejection", "flesh fade, and mortal trash", he reflects that: "This Jack, Joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal diamond is immortal diamond." This "Jack, joke" plodding behind the plough makes the trash and mud of earth shine like a diamond, "Waiting him out of it". A diamond flashing from the silicates of the soil is also, once again, the mirror of Christ in the hidden and humble heart of mortal clay.

Another aspect of this analogy of the plough grinding through the gritty soil is seen in the last line of Splet from Sybil's Leaves:

Where, selfwrung, sefstrung, sheathe-and-shelterless, thoughts agains thoughts in groans grind.

This aspect of the plough and the soil is the more obviously dramatic one-immortal beauty won from the harshest dullest toil, suffering, and discipline. *The Windhover* is such a richly complex poem precisely because all its themes had been explored by Hopkins in other poems. The range of the experience and multiplicity of integrated perceptions to be found here are not commonly met within poetry. Besides, the sonnet, *The Windhover,* has also been presented in the sprung rhythm. There are five stresses per lines, but with extra-metrical or outriding feet.

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN: FRANCIS THOMPSON

Life & Career:

Francis Thompson (16 December 1859 – 13 November 1907) was an English poet and Catholic mystic. At the behest of his father, a doctor, he entered medical school at the age of 18, but at 26 left home to pursue his talent as a writer and poet. He spent three years on the streets of London, supporting himself with menial labour, becoming addicted to opium which he took to relieve a nervous problem. In 1888 a married couple, publishers, read his poetry and took him into their home for a time. They were to publish his first book *Poems* in 1893. In 1897, he switched to writing prose, drawing inspiration from life in the countryside, Wales and Storrington. His health, always fragile, continued to deteriorate and he

died of tuberculosis in 1907. By that time he had published three books of poetry, along with other works and essays.

Outline of the poem:

"The Hound of Heaven" is a 182-line poem written by English poet Francis Thompson (1859–1907). The poem became famous and was the source of much of Thompson's posthumous reputation. The poem was first published in Thompson's first volume of poems in 1893. It was included in the *Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse* (1917). Thompson's work was praised by G. K. Chesterton, and it was also an influence on J. R. R. Tolkien, who presented a paper on Thompson in 1914.

This Christian poem has been described as follows:

"The name is strange. It startles one at first. It is so bold, so new, so fearless. It does not attract, rather the reverse. But when one reads the poem this strangeness disappears. The meaning is understood. As the hound follows the hare, never ceasing in its running, ever drawing nearer in the chase, with unhurrying and imperturbed pace, so does God follow the fleeing soul by His Divine grace. And though in sin or in human love, away from God it seeks to hide itself, Divine grace follows after, unwearyingly follows ever after, till the soul feels its pressure forcing it to turn to Him alone in that never ending pursuit." J.F.X. O'Conor, S.J.

Francis Thompson was a devout Roman Catholic who led a tortured life. After abandoning studies to become a priest and later a physician, he drifted and fell into financial hard times. So poverty-stricken was he in London, where he was pursuing a career as a writer, that he sold matches to earn money and borrowed paper on which to write poems. His troubles increased when he developed neuralgia. To relieve the acute pain of this condition, he began taking laudanum, a concoction of opium and ethanol. He became an addict.

In "The Hound of Heaven," the speaker runs from God in order to maintain the pleasures of his dissolute life. One can imagine the speaker's real-life counterpart, Thompson, doing the same as he pursued the groggy pleasures of his opium habit. Meanwhile, he contracted tuberculosis. Though he fought his drug habit, he eventually succumbed to TB, dying a month short of his forty-eighth birthday.

The speaker is running from God, as do many people caught up in the world. But God pursues him. Although aware of God's love for him, the speaker continues to run, believing that submitting to God means giving up worldly pleasures.

The speaker runs from place to place and even troubles “the gold gateway of the stars” in his effort to escape his pursuer. He pleads with dawn to be brief so that darkness may come to hide him. He asks the evening to cover him. But God still pursues him, saying, “Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.”

When the speaker sees little children, he thinks they cheer him on. But he finds no haven with them. Instead, he hears the voice of his pursuer:

"Lo! naught contents thee, who content’st not Me!"

His days pass swiftly when he swings “the earth a trinket at my wrist,” but eventually his youth stands “amid the dust o' the mounded years.” The happiness he sought in the things of the world has eluded him. A trumpet sounds from the battlements of eternity through the confounding mist of time. Then follows a loud voice: “Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!” It asks the speaker whether he has earned the love of another human, then answers,

Alack, thou knowest not

How little worthy of any love thou art!

Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,

Save Me, only Me?

God explains that what He took from the speaker—the pleasures that led him in the wrong direction—was not intended to hurt him but to help him find his way to the right path. The happiness that you think you lost, God says, is not lost but “stored for thee at home.”

“Rise, clasp My hand, and come!”

The speaker wonders whether the gloom he feels is nothing more than the shade cast by the hand of God reaching out to him. God tells him that the happiness he sought by running away was following him all the time.

Critical Analysis:

This title was inspired by a 182-line poem by an English poet named Francis Thompson (1859–1907). The title was often used by Puritans to refer to God, because it descriptively tells of God's relentless pursuit of man.

Thompson's poem was first published in 1893 and it gained popularity in the early 1900s when it was recognized and affirmed by G. K. Chesterton and J. R. R. Tolkien. Chesterton said, "it is the most magnificent poem ever written in English," to which Tolkien responded by saying Chesterton was not giving the poem the credit it deserves.

In the book, "*A Study of Francis Thompson's Hound of Heaven,"* author John O'Coner gives a noteworthy description of the poem. His description of the poem will cause you to want to read and meditate on this centuries-old, masterpiece of prose.

> "The name is strange. It startles one at first. It is so bold, so new, so fearless. And it does not attract, rather the reverse. But when one reads the poem this strangeness disappears. The meaning is understood. As the hound follows the hare, never ceasing in its running, ever drawing nearer in the chase, with unhurrying and imperturbed pace, so does God follow the fleeing soul by His Divine grace. And though in sin or in human love, away from God it seeks to hide itself, Divine grace follows after, unwearyingly follows ever after, till the soul feels its pressure forcing it to turn to Him alone in that never-ending pursuit."

The poem borrows language from the British hunt called Hare Coursing. Hare Coursing is the pursuit of hares by two dogs, predominantly greyhounds.
"with unhurrying chase, And unperturbèd pace, Deliberate speed, majestic instancy…"

The poem is based on a passage in Psalm 119. In verses 65-72, the psalmist is reviewing his life and sees a person who disobeyed God's word. The psalmist understands that God afflicted him for a good purpose and, in doing so, took him from disobedience to obedience. God broke him down and brought him to his knees in order to draw him to his Creator in faith and trust.

> *Psalm119:65-72 Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD,* according *unto thy word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.*

Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. Thou art good, and doest *good; teach me thy statutes. The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart. Their heart is as fat as* grease; *but I delight in thy law. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.*

NEXT, PLEASE: PHILIP LARKIN

Life & Career:

Philip Larkin is widely considered as one of the greatest English poets of the second part of the twentieth century. He was born on August 9, 1922, in Coventry, England, to Sydney Larkin (1884-1948) and his wife, Eva Emily Day (1886-1977). His sister Catherine, also known as Kitty, was ten years his senior. His father introduced him to the works of Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and, most importantly, D.H. Lawrence. His mother was a tense, passive woman.

His first collection of poems, The North Ship, was published in 1945, followed by two novels, Jill (1946) and A Girl in Winter (1947), but he rose to popularity in 1955 with the release of The Less deluded, followed by The Whitsun Weddings (1964) and High Windows (1965). (1974). From 1961 to 1971, he was The Daily Telegraph's jazz critic, and he authored essays that were collected in All What Jazz: a Record Diary 1961-71 (1985), and he edited The Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century English Verse (1973). He received numerous honours, including the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. Following the death of John Betjamin in 1984, he was given the title of poet laureate but declined.

His poems are distinguished by what Andrew Motion calls a "very English, glum accuracy" about emotions, places, and relationships, as well as "lowered sights and diminished expectations," as defined by Donald Davie. Eric Homberger referred to him as "the saddest heart in the post-war supermarket"—Larkin himself stated that deprivation was to him what daffodils were to Wordsworth.

W.H. Auden, W.B. Yeats, and Thomas Hardy have all affected Larkin. His poems are written in highly structured but adaptable poetry styles. Jean Hartley described them as a

"piquant mixture of lyricism and discontent," but anthologist Keith Tuma thinks that there is more to Larkin's writing than its reputation for bleak pessimism.

Outline of the poem:

Next Please is a poem written by Philip Larkin. This poem is included in Larkin's second volume The Less Deceived. The poet, in the very opening lines of the poem, clearly addresses the core theme of the poem, focusing on how human life revolves around hopes and expectations. We are all caught up in the web of life, where we are continuously busy going forward with enthusiasm, bursting with bright aspirations and faultless intentions, no matter how difficult the present appears. However, the poet believes that too much optimism about the immediate future is futile because the future is always shrouded in mystery and, more often than not, our plans can take unexpected turns where things do not necessarily turn out the way we expect them to and, even worse, leading to the final turn of our lives i.e., 'death' for some of us, whereby even the slightest possibilities of our fulfilled hopes and expectations, plunging us into despair. Perhaps this is why the wise and old often remind us that the key to having a full life is to live in the now and focus on our blessings rather than constantly harping on the unknown future.

The poet highlights that death is continually gaining on us with every passing instant through the days, months, and years, as we flip through the calendars oblivious to the fact that death has the ultimate power to stop us short at any given moment. Regardless, it is an all-too-human tendency to wait for all the good things to fill our life, in the hope of which we spend all of our plans and efforts. We eagerly await the advent of our long-cherished ambitions and dreams, which often seem to elude us without ever becoming a reality. At other times, when such moments do occur, we find it difficult to hold onto them because they slide through our hands like sand. Thus, the poem evokes a picture of an armada or fleet of warships that symbolically characterises the promises as well as the challenges of our near future, which we anxiously await but appears to procrastinate by taking its own sweet time. The learner may agree that we often overlook the beauty of living in the now and cherishing the here and now while we wait for better things to come our way.

Thus, as the poet's symbolic image reveals, when the fleet of warships is almost close enough that the fluttering sails and supporting ropes, as well as its shining brass-work and figurehead, are clearly visible, the entire fleet abruptly and hilariously changes course in an

instant. Instead of reaching land and dropping anchor, the ships are seen to move away without even stopping for a brief moment. Similarly, our aspirations and desires frequently evade us by deviating from their typical path, leaving us disillusioned, disappointed, and with countless setbacks in life. Furthermore, even when the best of times of which we dream and painstakingly work towards actualising or turn into our ideal reality in the immediate 'now,' such moments also fade away too quickly before we can really soak and relish in them. This is how quickly time slips by when every single moment in the present is continuously morphing into a moment of the past before we even realise it. As a result, we all continue to live in a state of continual disillusionment in which all of our goals and desires show to be nothing more than 'vanity,' and 'death,' which wields enormous power over our lives, proves to be the ultimate truth.

The poem illustrates the irony of our lives, in which, regardless of our goals, none of us is immune to the uncertainty of life, and no form of life on Earth can ever escape the unpredictability and inevitability of death. Thus, the poet describes a solitary ship (as opposed to a fleet of ships) that is certain to land and drop its anchor. This silent ship with a black sail symbolically depicting 'death' is slowly but steadily approaching our life, ready to carry us away with some justification or another, at any time and without warning. It is impossible to predict when, where, or how death will claim us, but it is guaranteed that we will be visited. Perhaps the poet wishes to convey his thoughts that, even as we wait "devoutly" and optimistically for the best in life, it is best to recognise that, in the certainty of death, there is nothing more important, necessary, or blissful than living in the present, cherishing every single moment of our lives, and celebrating life in every way possible before we arrive at the final turn of our lives.

Critical Analysis:

Next, Please, by Philip Larkin is a straightforward examination of the fallacy of expectation. A light-hearted start evolves into grim gallows-humour. Another significant recurring element in Larkin's work is an infinite yearning named Next, Please.

"Next Please" has the feel of a shop or a doctor's waiting room, and the final stanza's references to death hint at the solution. This is Death's summons! The Grim Reaper is loudly proclaiming this title to us all.

As implied by the title, the poem is self-explanatory. Larkin's diverse topics are grounded in truth and an empirical tone. He delivers to the reader the concept that death is a natural and unavoidable part of life for all humans. Similarly, though in a different context, Larkin very

plainly refers to our insights that nothing can stop us as humans. In other words, our aspirations are limitless. However, the real, empirical view indicates the inverse, namely that our desires are like to a ship without an "anchor." The poem begins with the following:

"Next Please" begins with a declaration of the emotional concept it is addressing:
Always too eager for the future, we Pick up bad habits of expectancy.
Something is always approaching; every day
Till then, we say,

Then a parable begins, with the poet clutching the reader's arm on a rocky cliff overlooking the sea. He is not referring to the terrible habit of anticipating things, but rather to the bad habit of expecting things in the first place. Larkin uses the phrase "Something is always approaching" to confirm that there is something to anticipate and to allow the reader to discern precisely what aspect of anticipating things he is referring to; anticipating a specific event does not constitute an excuse for anticipating extravagant consequences. Larkin demonstrates that these expectations are based on unproven assumptions.

The poem goes on to elaborate the concept through a metaphor. Life's events are seen as a line of approaching ships.

Watching from a bluff the tiny, clear the sparkling armada of promises

Long-awaited, they are now prepared to dump their cargoes into the poet's and reader's lives. (Throughout, Larkin uses the pronouns 'we' and 'us.') Larkin employs the term bluff to demonstrate that one's outlook on the future is speculative; it is based on pure supposition. The forgotten item (death) serves as the underlying foundation for all other expectations; an armada can be identified as anything linked with war, and the primary end of war is death. This is a tale, deliberately exaggerated and made absurd, with description taking the place of meaning, but it is done for the poet's own purposes:
though nothing balks
Each big approach, leaning with brasswork prinked,
Each rope distinct,

Flagged, and the figurehead with golden tits
Arching our way

However, regardless of their distinctions, these vessels and their cargoes are unreal. Yet, the poet asserts, we deserve everything they do not bring. They owe us for our patience: we should be compensated. Of course, there is no such thing as a reward in this case. At its heart is the implicit assumption that what is sought takes the form of a metaphor, shimmering but illusory, but what occurs is intellectually impenetrable, real, and unavoidable.

The terms "flagged" and "figurehead" refer to an idealisation of the future that is not grounded in reality; the ideal is simply a pleasant way in which man "[arches his] way," or visualises his journey, into the certainty of death. When a circumstance presents itself to man, he is prone to believe that nothing but the best will result.

Our vision of the future is like someone waiting for ships from a cliff. When we watch, the ships approach as though in hope, but become increasingly evident. As a result, our hopes and dreams are unabated. This in and of itself is a divine gift to continue and never cease. The wishes sparkle brilliantly in our mental portrayal's eyes. When we are disappointed, we attempt again and begin dreamily visualising our desires.

Oliver Boyd believes that:
In the poem, the ships are glittering sailing vessels, with ornamented figureheads – the objects of our desires are always more attractive before they are realized. When they are realized they begin to pale; the ships reach us, but do not anchor. They turn and recede once more into the distance. Larkin is demonstrating that our hopes are never realised, but when they are, the realisation is just brief.

Here, Larkin employs the gleaming ships to symbolise our multicoloured dreams. These wishes fill our hearts with joy, and we eagerly await the ships that will bring our want to fruition. We rush to accomplish our goals throughout our lives and especially while we are young, yet only disappointment awaits us.

But we are wrong;

Here, the author extinguishes man's hope for a better tomorrow. And it is at this point in the works' emotional and metaphysical development that they divide. Larkin's poem drops comedy like a mask to unveil what he perceives to be the future truth. Suddenly, a portal appears:

Only one ship is seeking us, a black- sailed unfamiliar, towing at her back a huge and birdless silence. In her wake, no waters breed or break.

Death itself comes, at the end, in the form of a metaphor.

This poem is written with care and finesse. Every facet of meaning and adornment is carefully balanced. Underneath the humour lies an emotion that is only rescued from dread by its orderliness; beneath that, the fear of the loss of order cannot be articulated because it is quiet. Only one ship is looking for us, and that is death itself.

When we get old, our wishes will no longer sparkle, and reality will unfurl itself like a black-sailed ship, which is the only factual symptom. As a result, death will be waiting for us, but this time we are feeling quite the opposite. Larkin advises all humans to be modest in their desires and not to surpass the normal limit.

Larkin employs a very simple vocabulary to convey the message he wants to convey. The theme of wish and disappointment moves in a never-ending circle. Larkin, as usual, uses systematic rhymes such as AA BB, but the theme is disillusionment after a lengthy wait. The run-on lines of poetry (enjambments) continue as if a driver were very swift and eager to get to his destination, yet the poem's climax contrasts sharply with the remainder of the poem.