Subject: poetry

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On his 24th Birthday

It has the rhyme scheme abba,abba, cde cde. This sonnet is of 14 lines written in iambic pentameter. This sonnet, like all the sonnets, is divided into two parts. The first part (the first eight lines) is called the octave. The second part of the sonnet ( the last six lines) is called the sestet. In the octave, the poet put forward a problem that worries him. In the sestet, he provides a solution to the problem raised in the octave. The problem in the octave is that the poet is complaining that he has not written as much poetry as he wants to write although he is now twenty four years old. In these days 24 is considered to be an age equal to the age of 44 now. In the sestet, he gives himself an advice as to how to overcome these worries.

Lines 1-2: The poet compares times to a clever young thief who moves very quickly as if he is flying and time has stolen the 23 years of the poet's life.

Line 3 : My days fly very quickly like a ship which sails and is full of wind ( the sails are full of wind).

Line 4: His career as a poet is like a spring that has come very late in the years, but even in this late spring, there are no signs of flowers or buds.

Line 5 : Maybe, my appearance as a mature man has deceived the truth about me.

Lines 6-7: Although I have reached manhood and yet my maturity inside as a poet does not show itself.

Line 8: I am not as a mature poet as those happy spirits who are very mature poets. He gave us an explanation of the problem that worries him which is that he is not mature enough as a poet and he feels that his performance as a poet is inadequate. This shows us the poet's ambitions but this complaint is common to all poets because all poets desire immortality for their works. The octave shows us Milton as a poet but it does not show us Milton as a man, i.e., it does not show us what kind of man he was. His character and personality are shown clearly in the sestet because in the sestet, the advice which he gives himself shows us more clearly the nature of his character.

In the sestet he says whether my poetry is small or large in quality, whether it comes quickly or slowly, it is very carefully measured and it is given to me according to what I deserve.

Lot: my fate

Even: even

There is contraction to maintain the meter.

Lines 11-12: The poetry that I am destined to write is carefully measured and whether it is good or bad poetry, I write it according to what time dictates me and according to the will of God. I write this poetry if I have the grace to use time and the will of God in the best possible way.

Line 14: task master: supervisor

The poet compares God to task master. He is saying that I should have grace to use my time and my talents properly because God who supervises everyone's work is closely watching me.

We notice in the octave that the poet puts forward a problem that worries him and this problem is that he is dissatisfied with his poetic output. In the octave, he is dissatisfied. This problem is common to all poets because all poets desire immortality and fame. These feelings are universal and common to all poets. In the sestet, he replies to this complaint and his reply is based on a religious interpretation and he is saying that God gives me time and talent and I write poetry according to the time and talent which I have been given and I must use this time and talent in the best possible way to write whatever poetry I am destined to write.

From Paradise Lost

This poem is one of the master pieces of world literature , it is a massive(large and impressive) epic, its subject is the creation and fall of man given in the first chapter of the Bible (Genesis) which tells the how God created the universe and placed Adam and Eve in Paradise ( the garden of Eden)and how he ordered them not to eat the forbidden fruit, but Satan lured them and they disobeyed God . As a result Adam and Eve were banished from Paras=dise and Satan was thrown into Hell.

Paradise Lost is a great epic because of several factors. First, it is a work of great imaginative vision. It is a great feat ( n. which means a clever, esp., bodily action showing strength, skill or courage) of the human imagination. It covers vast area of the imagination which very few poets attemted to depict before. So we read Paradise Lost because of its great imaginative power which helps us to expand our imagination and vision. Secondly, Paradise Lost is a work of very deep religious faith. It explains man’s relationship with God and his duties towards God. It helps us to understand the answers to such questions as “ what is man?” ,” What is man doing on earth?”, “what is man’s relationship with God?” etc… Third, Paradise Lost appeals to the universal ideas about man and it appeals to every thinking person who is concerned about man and his place in the universe.

There are two kinds of poetry, : 1- universal poetry which appeals to people generally and which every thinking person can respond to. 2. There is restricted poetry which appeals to a limited number of readers , this number varies according to the reader’s age, interests, moods , etc…Nursery rhymes appeals to children, love poetry appeals to young people, poems which present a theme like a train leaving a station appeal to people which have certain mood or with special interests. But Paradise Lost has a universal appeal because its subject is basic to human existence as a whole , i.e., man’s position on earth and his relationship with God. So we read the poem because it teaches us about man and what is expected of him. The basic concept around which Paradise Lost revolves is the concept of sin and how this sin is punished according to its degree. In order to understand this epic, we have to understand very clearly this concept of sin and how sin offends (to do wrong, to cause displeasure to hurt the feelings of ) God and God’s retribution (deserved punishment )to the sin committed by man and the fallen angles like Satan. This concept of sin is both elaborate (full of detail/ carefully worked out and with large number of parts) and precise ( clear and correct in regards to the smallest details). Besides, God’s retribution is very precise and is applied to the various degrees of sins committed by man.

According to religion, there are seven sins, the basic forms of sin which everyone of us can commit very easily anyday and they are called “ the seven deadly sins” which are “

1-Pride, 2- lust, 3- envy, 4- covetousness (too eager desire for wealth, possessions or what belongs to someone else), 5-gluttony ( the habit of eating and drinking too much), 6-anger, 7-slowth . These sins may lead to perdition (everlasting punishment after death, complete destruction) because each one of these sins can lead to the others. Someone will fall if these sins are indulged in. Paradise Lost deals with these sins and how those who had committed them have been punished according to each particular sin which they have committed.

John Milton : A biography

He was born in 1608 and he died in 1674. He was the son of a wealthy scrivener ( in former times, a person who wrote letters for people who could not write). He was a scriveners because he was arranging property deals. Milton received a first rate education. He went to the best school in London and then to Cambridge where he was very learned in the classics and Latin. He travelled to Italy where he was acquainted first hand with the Italian Renaissance. His works show a mixture of puritanism and also the influence of the renaissance thought. Milton’s most famous work is Paradise Lost which is a massive epic about the creation and the fall of man.

Milton is a Puritan and an ascetic ( part of a group who were afainst all worldly pleasures like singing , dancing, going to the theatre). The leader of the Puritans was Oliver Cromwell and Milton belongs to this sect.

Puritan : In England and New England in the 16th and 17th centuries , a member of a religious group that wished to make religion simpler and opposed the use of ceremony in church services).

Paradise Lost ( Invocation)

The Invocation Milton’s Paradise Lost begins with the Invocation. The poet pleased God to inspire him to write the kind of epic that he wants to write. The Invocation is the actual beginning of the poem and in it Milton explains his motives for writing Paradise Lost.

Lines 1-2 The poet is referring to the first act of disobedience that man has committed by eating the fruit from the forbidden tree. He is referring to the forbidden fruit and he is saying that because the first man ate from this fruit he died ( in a certain way), because he ate from the forbidden fruit, he brought death into the world, he means that is an abomination ( causing great dislike, hateful, detestable) because man disobeyed God and ate from it.

Death was brought into the world by this sin because sin is a form of death, because of sin, man lost Eden, the prophet who will come will restore Eden to man.

Line 5 The poet is saying that man has lost paradise because of his sin and we must wait till a great prophet comes and restores Eden to us.

Line 6 Muse : God of petry

The poet appeals ( a strong request for help, support and mercy) to the heavenly muse , he means God as the God of poets and poetry.

Lines 5,6,7,8,9

Sinai : a mountain

Shepherd : Muses

Chosen seen : chosen people

He appeals to God as the God of poets and poetry and he is saying that You inspire Muses on Mount Sinai and the Muses taught the chosen people how God created heaven and earth out of nothing.

Line 10 Chaos : nothingness

Sion Hill : a hill in Jerusalem

Oracle :a person who believes himself to be very wise and able to give the best advice.

Line 12 invoke : to call out to (a power esp God) for help, to request or beg for)

Song : epic

He is saying after this I want to ask for your help for my adventurous song (ambitious poem)

Line 14 soar : to fly

Ionian Mountain : the name of a mountain in ancient Greece which is very sacred to the Muses.

He is saying to God help me while I write my ambitious epic for my epic intends to rise very high above the mountain of the Muses . The poet is very ambitious , he want his epic to be the greatest epic ever written.

Perseus : flies

While my epic flies high above the mountain of the Muses, it follows things that no one had attempted before in either prose or poetry.

Rime : rhyme

We find how ambitious Milton is for this epic.

Line 17 -18 He is invoking God as a God of poetry. The spirit is the spirit of God Which inspires all poetry. He is addressing God as the spirit of all poetry. He is saying : You prefer a pure and upright heart better than any magnificent temple that has ever been built in Your Honor.

Line 19 instruct me : teach me

You are the one who knows the subject of my epic. You were present from the beginning of creation and You know everything, You know how the world was created therefore, I ask You to teach me how to write this epic. There are two reasons for this appeal, first, Milton was a deeply religious person and as a Puritan, and a Protestant he appealed to God directly rather than through the church. Second : the nature of his epic, i.e., the story of the creation and the fall is one for which God is the only source. This is shown in Line 19 and the first part of Line 20 he says You are present from the beginning and You know how the creation begun.

Line 20 in his appeal to God, he compares himself to a great dove which spreads its wings and sits on the eggs of the fast chasm ( which is the world before creation ). And just as a dove which broads (extending far and wide) on its eggs before they hatch (to break letting the young bird out), God protects the world he is creating until it gives life, and just as the dove egg hatches into life the young birds through its care and protection. God loves and protects His creation until it comes into life like a chick which comes to life from the egg.

Line 22 God mad the world pregnant of life. There are various aspects of this metaphor.

The question is why did Milton compare God at the beginning of creation to a dove?

God created the world in peace He wanted peace to reign over the world .

Line 22 He is invoking the aid of God and asks God to lighten up what is dark in him (the poet).

He is appealing to God to raise him to the level necessary to make him worthy to write this ambitious epic.

Lines 23-25 He is appealing to God to raise him and to make him worthy to this task so that he can claim that he has the inspiration of Providence when he wrote this epic.

This line becomes a proverb and he means that if he is inspired by God to write this epic, he will then succeed in explaingin God’s ways to mankind.

Succinct : ( clearly expressed in few words)

This account of creation as it was given by the Genesis was succinct , Milton wanted to explain the Bible to his follows . Milton as a Protestant who relied on the Bible as the sole ( having no sharer, being the only one) word of God wanted to elaborate on the account of the creation and the Fall as given in Genesis and to endow it (give) with a wealth of pictorial details and in wanting to do so he appealed to God to inspire him to write a true account of the Creation and the Fall.

The Invocation is the actual beginning of Paradise Lost. The Fallen Angles is the extract that comes later on in the epic and this extract tells how God punished Satan for his rebellion and for inciting (to try to encourage someone to a strong feeling or action) other angles to disobey God and for his luring ( to tempt ,esp., away from what one should do into something one should not) God’s favorite creatures to disobey him. We said that there are seven basic sins , the concept of Paradise Lost revolves around the sin (to have as a center or a main object). Satan’s sin : rebellion and disobedience were compound of man’s basic sins which include crime : Satan was very proud of his status as an Angle of God , 2- envy : Satan envied Adam and Eve for the favorite position they enjoyed in God’s eyes. 3- covetousness : Satan coveted God’s position and he challenged God’s authority , 4- Anger : Satan was angry with God for all the above reasons therefore, Satan was very severely punished for these enormities(evil actions). In this extract, there is a description of how God throw Satan out of heaven and into Hell. These details are not available in the Genesis and they constitue one of the basic attractions in Paradise Lost.

**John Milton The Fallen Angels**

**This poem employs pictorial description of how Satan is tortured in Hell.**

**Hurl: to throw with force.**

**Combustion: the act of catching fire and burning.**

**Line 6: one of the reasons for which Paradise Lost was written was to provide pictorial details about the creation and the fall which was not available in the Genesis. The poem provides details about the time that it took Satan to fall down from heaven to Hell.**

**Lines 7-8: Nine nights and days 24 hours, nine times equals the time it took Satan to fall from Heaven to Hell.**

**Lines 8-10 horrid: terrible.**

**Crew: a group**

**Vanquish: to conquer, defeat completely.**

**Confounded : confused.**

**The poet describes how Satan and his group of fallen angels have landed in Hell. They lay defeated in the fires of Hell. They were confused but immortal.**

**Q. Why are they immortal?**

**Everything happens in Hell is directly or indirectly refers to sin. The answer is related to the concept of sin, if you commit a sin you will get away with a light punishment but if your sin is enormous like Satan’s sin, the punishment for this sin is consequently be eternal therefore, Satan suffered from immortal punishment for his sin…**

**Line 10: doom: fate**

**Here we have another aspect of Satan’s sins. One of the basic ways to go away with sin is through repentance. Repentance redeems sins, so Milton is saying here that one of the basic reasons for which Satan suffered an eternal torture was because he was unrepentant. One of the main sins which Satan was punished for was anger.**

**Lines 10-11 We see that Satan is unrepentant for his sins so while he is suffering in Hell he was more angry. His fate made him more angry than before for now the thought of lost happiness and lasting pain (everlasting pain) torments him. He was angry because of the happiness which he lost and the everlasting pain he is going to suffer. This made him more angry with God than he was before.**

**Baleful : sorrowful.**

**Dismay: disappointment.**

**Mixed : obdurate, stubborn.**

**Steadfast: contestant.**

**We have a description of Satan’s feelings as it was reflected by his eyes.**

**Lines 13-15 As they are reflected in his eyes (his feelings) they reflect the suffering and disappointment, they are full of sorrow. He is full of disappointment that he was subjected to.**

**Line 15: It is important because he shows us the two main sins which Satan was guilty of but which he had not repented and these are hatred and pride.**

**Lines 16-17:**

**Dismal: miserable.**

**Waste: disappointment.**

**Milton describes how Satan was thrown in Hell which hefinds himself in.**

**Lines 18-20: It is a pictorial description of the horrors of Hell. It is these descriptions which constitue one of the strong points in the poem. It begun in the poem when Satan was described as bounded by bars (chains).**

**Dungeon: cell**

**The flames of Hell don’t give light but gives darkness.**

**Discover : reveal.**

**The purpose of these flames of Hell is to reveal only the sight of misery and sorrow.**

**Line 22:**

**Doleful: sorrowful.**

**There is no peace in Hell and there is no rest in Hell. There is no hope in Hell. Hope comes to every one in life, without hope there is no life but in Hell hope does not exist.**

**Urges: persists.**

**Deluge : flood(fiery flood).**

**This means that in Hell there is always a deluge of fire which is always fed with sulphar that always burns but never burns itself.**

**Q. Where did he say that one of the purposes of writing Paradise Lost was to provide a detailed description of the creation which was not available in the Genesis?**

**Where did Milton get these details about Hell? Milton was a very learning man, and these detais were available in the writing of the sense.**

**He read many books about this issue.**

**Line 27: This is a sort of place which God had prepared for this rebellious angle. We find this terrible torture inflected on Satan because of his rebelliousness and his disobedience. So rebelliousness is a very great abomination in the eyes of God and God will inflect terrible punishment for this sin.**

**Q. Why is rebelliousness an abomination in the eyes of God?**

**Because as we see in the extract of Paradise Lost, God created the world in peace and order, rebelliousness is an attempt to destroy this peace.**

**Ordain: to establish or order by appointment, decree or law.**

**God had made Hell the prison for those rebellious angles.**

**Portion: an individual part or share of something.**

**Pole: either extremity of an axis of a sphere and especially of the earth’s axis.**

**The distance between Satan’s place in Hell and the light of heaven is equal to 3 times a distance between the center of the earth and the utmost pole.**

Satan's Adjuration

This extract is a monologue by Satan describing his feelings of resentment ,rebelliousness and how he defies God while he was in Hell. In Line 1 he is saying that it does not matter if that battle field is lost, I have not lost the whole war for the following reasons :

1- I have an unconquerable will.

2- I have time to study and plan my revenge.

3- I have hatred which will never die (immortal)

4- I have the courage never to surrender (submit) or yield.

Line 5 meaning for all these reasons I have not been overcome.

Lines 5-6 That glory means that glory of having all the above advantages, God with all His wrath and power will never extort ( to obtain something by force or threat from someone) that glory from me.

Sue : beg for mercy

For me to bow before God and ask for his mercy with suppliant knees and deify his power that I will not do.

Suppliant: (a person) begging, praying or requesting.

Deify: to make a god of, to take as an object of worship, to consider and treat as of the very highest value.

Line 9 Because the power of this arm of mine I have lately cause doubt on God’s empire(kingdom).

Lines 10-12 He is saying that if I was to do that i.e., ask for God’s mercy on my knees that would be very shameful than the shame of my present downfall. Since by fate, the strength of gods, the substance which Satan was created of (pure light and fire)cannot fall, i.e., because the fate decreed that the strength of gods and this substance from which the gods are created (empyreal) they cannot fall.

Empyrean: the highest part of heaven where in former times God was said to live, sky.

Decree: to state something officially with the force of law.

Satan considered himself to be a god and he is thereby the legitimate adversary to God.

Line 14 Because of the experience I have had in this downfall as a result of the experience of my downfall, I have not suffered much in the way of my ability to fight and my ability to foresee has been much improved.

Line 16 : resolve : to decide, to make a resolution.

Wage: to begin and continue a struggle of some kind.

Guile: deceit esp. of a clever and indirect kind./ cunning.

He is saying that so that we may hope successfully wage war either by force of arms or by cunning.

Line 18 Satan said that this war against all the plans for our great enemy.

Reign : rule

The last two lines show us how Satan envies God’s position as the ruler of heaven and how he compares Him to a tyrant who rules alone. This extract shows us the nature of evil as represented by Satan.

Q. Where are the aspects of evil?

Lines 7-8 Satan’s pride , his refusal to worship God. Immortal hate , Satan considered himself to be a god. (lines 12-13), he envies God’s position (the last two lines).

Q. In this extract identify the aspects of Satan’s guilt and sinfulness.

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Eden

This is a description of the Garden of Eden in the 17th century, the concept of the garden of Eden is prevailing (most common or general at a certain time or in a certain place),was that it was situated in Mesopotamia. Milton however based his description of Eden on the garden of the great palaces and country houses of that period. It was an age of active landscapes gardening and the gardens of the great palaces included vast stretches of lawn, waterfall and fountains, rock gardens , boat lakes and we find various aspects in these descriptions of Eden.

Line 1 He is referring to Eden, from different sights, (as a place which has different sights)-orchard.

Line 3 He describes the orchard with trees that secretes gums which are used in making perfumes. In the 16th and 17th centuries Arabia was famous for its perfumes and the reference to the gum trees indicates that Eden being placed in northern Arabia.

Line 4 He is saying that other trees have fruits whose peel shines like gold.

Line 5 Q. Why does he describe the hanging fruit of Eden as amiable?

The fruit offers itself –in an amiable way-

Hesperian’s are Geek legends about God Who created everything. The fruit of Eden is very available and it proves that the Hesperian stories are true.

Line 6 It it is true, then, they prove that the garden of Eden existed first, for the fruit mentioned in the Hesperian legends is the fruit of paradise.

Line 7 Between the orchard, there are lovely lands and lovely flocks.

Irriguous: irrigated

Lines 8-11 He is saying that in between there are small hills with palm trees or some valley which is irrigated and the lap of the valley is full of flowers.

Line 11 In this vally there are flowers of all colors and the flowers have no thorns, nothing causes pain in Eden.

Line 12 In another side of paradise, we have shaded caves.

Line 13 He says that over these caves the vine spread itself thickly like a mantle. He describes how the vine spreads itself thickly over the caves in Eden. There is nothing that distresses or irritates.

Line 16 slope: sloped dispersed the water falls down the sloping hills and in a lake. The shores of the lake are crowned with myrtle. He compares the surface of the lake to a mirror and the lake unite all streams that flow into it.

Line 19

Quive-choir

The significance of the word air: the birds sing like a choir and he describes the songs of the birds as a song in praise of the spring air.

Line 20 attune : harmony

As the birds smell the odors of the field and grove, they sing and their song attuned with the sound of the leaves.

Renaissance was the age during which the civilization of the Greek and the Roman were rediscovered.

Line 21 reflects the influence of the Renaissance on Milton’s poetry.

Pan led the dances and the songs that celebrates eternal spring so Paradise Lost is the sound of eternal spring.

Revision of Milton

The first part of Paradise Lost is The Invocation. From Line 1-4 Milton points to the cause of man’s downfall and this cause is his disobedience of God’s will. We learn that man’s fall from paradise to the earth was because of his disobedience. From lines 5-12 Milton sets the examples of two prophets Moses and Jesus whom God inspired and he asks God to inspire him in the same ways as a poet.

Lines 13-16 shows us the ambition Milton has for himself as a poet and that the epic he wants to write , he desires to be insuperable ( of something in one’s way, which is very difficult to be conquered or passed)by anything that has been written before, so this shows us Milton as an ambitious poet.

From lines 17-19 Milton addresses God as the Source of Inspiration for all poets and in asking Him to inspire him, he offers his pure and upright heart as a justification for this inspiration. From lines 19-22 Milton asks God to inspire him because God was present at the creation and He is his sole source of knowledge on this subject and in comparing God to a great dove, Milton shows that God created the world in peace and that anything that obstructs the progress of this peace or attempts to destroy it shall incur the wrath of God.

Incur: to receive some unpleasant thing as a result of a certain action.

From lines 22-26 Milton is conscious of his defects and weakness as a man and asks God to rectify these defects so that he would be worthy of writing this great and ambitious epic about such a sublime subject.

Rectify: to put right

Sublime :very noble and wonderful, of the highest quality

The second extract : Fallen Angles

This extract contains pictorial details about the fallen angles, their descent from heaven into Hell and the poet describes how Satan and his group lay defeated but defiant in Hel. It also provides us with the pictorial descriptions of Hell and its horrors.

The next extract, Satan Adjuration is an elaboration of the previous extract, it provides details about the nature of Satan’s sinful defiance, it describes Satan’s plan to defy God and to attempt to destroy His Kingdom. This defiance is directed against God’s peaceful intentions for the world and by waging war. The important aspect of this extract is that it provides a succinct account of the nature of evil in its confrontation with the power of God. We have this extract and the previous one, we have a list of Satan’s sins (pride, anger, envy, covetousness …) which when compounded together they make up Satan’s major sin which is rebelliousness and his attempt to disrupt (to bring or throw into disorder) God’s creation. Then we have Eden , in this extract we have a description of the garden of Eden and its significance lies in the contrast between it and man’s life on earth. Eden represents everything that man had been deprived of because of his sinful disobedience. In Eden there is a prevailing peace and tranquility. There are no forms of distress , or tension or anything that gives pain or causes irritation, for example, there are no variations in the climate, there is no distressing hot summers or cold winters, it is a land of eternal spring. Eden represents everything man yearns for, but which he had forfeited(to have something taken away from one because some agreement or rule has been broken or as a punishment or as a result of some action) because of his sinful disobedience.

Q. What is to be learned from Paradise Lost? Why do we study the poem?

The poem shows a contrast between disturbance and order, between peace and war. Second, it presents the theme of creation and sin, the basic concept is the concept of sin, God created man to be in perpetual state of grace (sinless), because man was week, he succumbs (to yield) before temptation and he was lures by Satan to disobey God and therefore he was punished and lives in a state of distress and irritation, he was made to suffer on earth. This is the price that he paid for all his wickedness and disobedience.

Third, the poem presents the concept of evil. What creature represents evil? The disobedience of Satan was the result of his sins, his pride, anger, envy and covetousness. All these sins cause him to disobey God and to rebel and to challenge God’s authority and for this he was punished, so one of the things which we learn was an account of the nature of evil as represented by Satan.

Dryden

The classical or Augustine school. Dryden and Pope represent the classical or the Augustine school of poetry. This school was a reaction against the Elizabethan poetry which was characterized by a flowery and emotional sort of poetry. The Augustine or classical school modeled itself on Roman literature during the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus during which literature and the arts especially poetry reached a height of excellence. This literature was characterized by :

1-moderation, 2- sense,3- balance, 4-lack of sentimentality and excess. The classical school of poetry in the late 17th and 18th modeled itself on Roman poetry of the Augustine period, it taught that a poet should not be indulged in fanciful or sentimental poetry, but should use sense and wisdom in his writing. It taught that man is a rational creature and his rationality and sense of balance and wisdom should reflect itself in his writings. The two main representatives of this school are John Dryden and Alexander Pope.

John Dryden : A biographical sketch

He was born in 1631 and died in 1701, he belonged to the church of England and he was protestant in 1682, but he changed his religion and joined the catholic church in 1686. Dryden is well-known as a literary critic and he was a sharp observer of his time. He described events that took place and he was an acute observer of the political and social scene in England. One of his famous works is Absalom and Achitophel which is a satire on the two main claimants of the English throne in his time, the Earl of Shaftesbury and the Duke of Buckingham. This is a famous work and it shows his sharp and critical faculties.

The Fire of London The poem is about the fire of London which broke out early in the morning of Sunday, September the second, 1666. It started in a baker’s shop in Podding Lane, one of London’s alleys. It raged for six days and six nights and destroyed most of London, here the poet describes scenes from the fire and we have extracts from the poem. We have an extract of six stanzas.

The first stanza :

Repose: rest

The poet is saying that night fell but there is no darkness because of the fire.

General doom : the day of judgment / The poet is comparing the confusion and the horror and the fear with the day of judgment. London at that time was like judgment day when a trumpet blows and dead people awake from their graves. This last line is a description of how the dead are called by the trumpet in the day of judgment and they come to be judged but they are not ready, they come reluctantly(unwilling and slow to act). The significance of the first stanza is that it makes a comparison between the city during this disaster and the day of judgment. The important thing is to analyze the aspects of the comparison between the two.

Q. What are the aspects of comparison between the fire of London and the day of judgment?

The aspects of similarity are :

* In the day of judgment people are unready to be judged when the trumpet blows (line 4).
* People are terrified and confused and there is confusion and disorder.
* There is no rest or repose, people are terrified by this unnatural situation, during the fire of London, there was no darkness, the day of judgment is an unnatural event, people are terrified and bewildered(confused).

Second stanza : repair : to return to

The poet is saying that those people who have homes , when they return home to a last lodging , called their friends. Those people who still have homes when they do return to their homes, they invite their friends who have lost their homes to stay with them because this is the only lodging they have.

Lodging : temporary residence

Their short uneasy sleep is broken with care to look, the poet referred to the people who still have homes and when thy sleep at night, their sleep is broken with worry they don’t sleep well because they think how close to disaster they were and how easily they could have lost their own homes just as their friends had lost their homes.

Stanza five the most infield : the most of those who lost their homes.

Beasts : animals

Herded : to look after and drive animals in a herd.

Line 1 : Most of the people who have lost their homes lie down in fields like herds of animals.

Q. Is this description appropriate or delicat?

This description is hard but it is realistic because those people who lost their homes have lost also their human individuality and dignity. They have become deprived and frightened that is the reason for this description. He describes them as animals not because he is hard to them (cruel) , but because he feels pathos , he is full of pathos( especially in literature, the quality in speech or writing that causes pity or sorrow).

Obnoxious : unpleasant or nasty

The poet uses the word “floor” to describe the ground of the field. The poet uses it poetically because it is the only habitation they have.

Line 2 : The dew on the fields finds those people unpleasant-why? Because the dew represents the most delicate aspect of nature’s beauty and because those people have become coarse and unattractive because of the plight, the dew resents them. This is a very realistic aspect of the poem , during the scene of panic, infants usually sleep it off, the babies overcome the disaster by sleeping in their mother’s laps.

Remnants : a part that remains.

Store: provision.

Line 4 : While the children sleep , their parents watch carefully what little profession they have..

Q. Why do they watch their provision carefully?

They do so because they are afraid to lose it. It is a time of panic and confusion. They guard their provision to prevent it from being stolen. Without their provision they lose their dignity.

Stanza 6: They watch the movement of the flames, what streets are burning now and what streets could burn soon. They realize that the fate of the city depends on air currents. These two lines represent an element of tension because people are helpless in the face of natural disaster like this. Their lives and their fates depend on natural phenomenon ,completely outside their control. They are completely vulnerable(easily harmed, hurt or wounded).

The last two line:

Pap: a woman’s nipple.

He is saying when a child wakes up in his mother’s arms, and presses against his mother’s breast for milk, he gets instead of milk a falling tear. The significance of these two lines is the nature of metaphor and the connection between milk and tears and their relationship to the disaster that has fallen on them.

In traditional English poetry, milk is a symbol of kindness and its taste is considered to be sweet. Its taste is poetically described as sweet (like wine) , also tears are the symbol of sistress, and its taste is considered poetically to be bitter (not salty). The mother’s milk has dried up because of the disaster, she has no kindness or sweetness to give to her child , the child can expect only the bitterness of his mother’s tears, so here the poet through this metaphor seeks to draw the reader’s sympathy to the plight of those people.

The fire of London Revision

Stanza two: The basic point about this poem is its aspects of realism, just as the basic point of Milton’s poem Paradise Lost is the concept of sin and punishment. In each stanza of the poem we have to know the aspects of realism because these aspects make the poem memorable and they constitute its strongest points as a work of literature. The aspect of realism in the first stanza lie in the apt (very precise) comparison between the day of judgment and the fire of London and the important point in stanza one is to discuss the various aspects of this comparison. In stanza 2, the aspects of realism lie in showing the fear of people. The aspects of disaster of this kind bring out certain aspects of human nature which tends towards the cooperative and the charitable.

Q Why do people help one another during such times of disaster ? People who still have homes help others who lost their homes because they realize how close their own homes were to destruction.

Stanza 3 Those who have lost their homes sit in the ruins whew their houses once were.

Require : to look for again.

Line 2 They look with eyes full of sorrow to where each room once were.

Line 3 Haunting: to visit a place regularly.

Expire :to die

In this stanza the aspects of realism lie in the first two lines, we have a description of how people lost their homes and sit looking with eyes full of sorrow to the ruins of their houses. In this poem the aspects of realism are clear, we have a very accurate metaphor, comparisons and simile.

In this poem we have a very accurate description. In the first stanza we have comparison between the fire of London and the day of judgment. In the third stanza, in the last two lines , we have a very accurate and precise comparison between the people who have lost their homes and ghosts that haunt the place where they died because in European Lore(knowledge or wisdom , especially of an unscientific kind, about a certain subject or possessed by a certain group of people), it is believed that when a person has been killed , his ghost haunt the place where he is murdered. This comparison is very apt.

Q. Why is this comparison very apt and how?

There is a kind of similarity between the people who have been murdered and the people whose houses were destroyed. The basic point about comparison is the feeling of being wronged and being victimized. Just as the murdered person haunts the place where he was murdered out of his sense of being wronged and seeking justice so the people who had their houses burned have come out of a sense of grievance. The second point concern the concept of life, the murdered man’s soul haunts the place because that is where it was deprived of life and in the same way, people haunt the ruins of their homes because their homes represent their lives.

Stanza 4 Vestal fire : refers to the fire that burnt in the temple of the Roman goddess Vesta ( the Roman goddess of the hearth). The first fire burnt for a long time. The poet compares this fire to the fire of London because it is burning continuously.

Line 2: Others run away uselessly from the sight of the ruin. The first two lines represent the aspect of realism.\*\*\*Why?

They are realistic because they reflect the sense of futility (uselessness) which is generated by this disaster.

Labyrinth(a network of narrow twisting passages or paths that meet and cross each other through which it is very difficult to find one’s way/something that is difficult to understand or do because there are many ideas or thoughts). In this line we have metaphor. The poet is comparing the alleys (a narrow street or path between buildings in a town)with burning labyrinths. \*\*\*Why?

In normal times people know their ways in and out of their alley, there are numerous lines (marks)to show them their way, but during the fire, everything is burning so they do not know where they are and the fire greatly increases their confusion so they are confused who is …….

Loathe: to feel hatred or great dislike for.

Shun: to avoid with determination/ keep away from

The poet describes the people, their eyes are full of fear, hesitation and revulsion( a feeling of being shocked and revolted) . They reluctantly tell of their disaster. They would prefer to avoid repeating what they are saying.\*\*Why? Because during such disaster, people are reluctant to talk about their disaster. They are occupied with their feelings.

A Song for St. Cecilia’s Day P.180

This poem is a poem about music, and it was written in honor of St. Cecilia, the Pantheon saint of music. She was a very pious woman and it was said that an angle came down from heaven and taught her about music and singing. She was martyred by the Romans in the beginning of the third century. In her honor, there was a series of annual celebration and it was established in 1683 and Dryden wrote a word for the celebration in 1687 and 1697, so this poem was written to be set to music.

The basic concept of this poem is about the power of music and music being a source of harmony in creation.

Lines1-2 The poet is saying that the universe began with harmony that emanated from heaven.

Emanate: to come originally from.

Line 3: heap: a pile or a mass of things one on top of another.

Jarring: to make an unpleasant sound.

Lay: to cause to lie.

Lines 3-4: The poet is saying that in the beginning of creation before this harmony of heaven, nature lay underneath a pile of rubble of uncoordinated atoms (materials).

Line 5 : She could not move her head from underneath the rubble. She=nature

Line 6 tuneful: having a pleasant tune, pleasant to listen to.

The voice of God was heard from high, the musical voice of God was heard from high.

Line 7: The musical voice was heard telling nature to rise because nature is not dead but it was laid , the voice commanded nature to arise from underneath.

Line 8: Station: their appointed place .

Lines 8-10: The voice of God after it called to nature then everything in nature whether it was cold ,hot, moist or dry, each of these aspects jumped to its appointed position in the system of creation.

Extols : to praise very highly. The music is in harmony, the creation is in harmony, so there is a relationship between them.

The poet succeeded in comparing the harmony of nature and the harmony of music. The voice of God which was in harmony has a power to do such great things. The music has a power. In this line the poet refers to the music as something holy and powerful.

Lines 11-12: This is a refrain, the object of this refrain is to underline the importance of harmony as the coordinating force in nature.

Coordinate: to cause to work together especially to increase effectiveness.

Line 15: The third theme is : from harmony to harmony, from the harmony of creation to the harmony of music , the compass of nature. There is a harmony through the musical scale. In music there is a musical scale, in each note there are subdivisions which are called diapason. The full range of all musical scale subdivisions. Man in himself contains every note of music, so that the diapason in its intirety is enclosed in man.

Quell: to thoroughly overwhelm and reduce to submission and passivity.

Line 16: This line is a question which means that music has the power to raise and suppress any emotion known to man , music has the ability to raise and suppress man’s emotions.

Line 17: Jubal : character in the Bible.

Corded shell : primitive music , instrument.

Brethren: brothers

Celestial: heavenly.

His brothers fell on their faces to worship that sound because they thought there was a god in that shell because the music was so sweet.

The last line is a refrain, the object of the refrain is to underline the importance of what the poet is saying and here the poet is underlining the fact that music even if it is performed on the most primitive instruments, has the ability to move man’s emotions profoundly.

The object of this stanza is to show us how deeply music can effect man as in this case of Jubal’s brothers who were so deeply moved that they fall on their faces and begun to worship this musical instrument because they thought that there was a god in it.

The next four stanzas are an elaboration of this stanza, in stanza 2, the poet is saying that music can effect man very deeply, in the next four stanzas, he explains how and in what way music can effect man.

Stanza 3:

Shrill notes: musical notes.

Alarm: a warning of danger, as by ringing a bell or shouts.

Charge: attack.

This stanza refers to the effect of music in Warfield, the trumpet, because it has a very high-pitched sound it serves to excite people to carry arms because its sound excites anger and alarm to b ready, the voice of the trumpet serves to excite people and their sense of alarm and anger against their enemy in order to defeat them. The poet refers to the sound of the drum which serves to prompt people to attack the enemy and raise their fighting spirit. This stanza shows how music can affect people in Warfield.

Last stanza:

Lay: short poem.

From the power of secret music which comes from God, the heavenly bodies begun to move. It was believed then that the heavenly bodies when they rotate (move around)in orbits, they generate musical power. It was also believed that there was a close relationship between astronomy and music for the said reasons.

Lines 3-4 Blessed above: the sphere generated music , sung the praise of God to all the blessed creation in heaven. So when the last and dreadful hour devour….The poet is saying that in the last terrible hour of the world which will devour (destroy) the world (crumping pageant), the trumpet of the day of judgment will be heard in heaven.

Deprive the sky of music-

The last line is important, the music of God i.e., God as the original source of music shall destroy the music in the skies generated by the spheres so that there will be no more music in the skies and the only music remaining is the music of God in heaven. The significance of the last stanza is that it shows that music will end with the end of the world just as music begun with the beginning of the world i.e., music is life.

In the previous stanza, the poet discusses the influence of music on warfield and he mentions how trumpets and drums excite people in emotional fusion.

Fourth stanza: it about the influence of music on love.

Woes: the sadness of hopeless lovers.

Dirge: a funeral chant.

Warbling: especially of birds, to sing with a clear, continuous, yet varied notes.

Lute: a musical instrument.

In this stanza, the poet describes the effect of the lute on lovers, the lute reflects the sadness of hopeless love and the metaphor here is in the word “complain” the sound of the lute is described as complaining about their sad affair. The sound of the lute reflects the sadness of the loves.

Dirge: a funeral chant

The significance of this word is that it reflects that the hopless love is a form of death. The significant word is warbling, the dirge of hapless love is whispered by the lute which he describes as warbling.

Q. Why does he describe the lute as warbling?

When does it reflect the sadness of hopeless love?

Because hopeless love gives a kind of sad pleasure to others and this sad pleasure is reflected by the sound of the lute (example: great love stories talks about sad love, hopeless love, even though it gives a kind of sad pleasure to others that’s why we read them. This sad pleasure is reflected by the sound of the lute.

Proclaim: announce.

Pang: feeling of sharp pain.

Frantic: indignation.

Disdainful: to regard with disdain(lack of respect, a feeling that someone or something is low or worthless.

This stanza reflects the feeling of an unrequited love, the unrequited love of a man for a beautiful disdainful woman, man’s feelings are described (lines2-3). He is jealous, his feeling of jealousy and desperation, anger and agitated indignation, deep pain and high passion. All these feelings are the feelings of love by a man for a woman who is beautiful and arrogant and who rejects his advances.

The significance of this stanza is that it shows how accurately the sound of violence reflects the totality of these feelings.

Stanza 5: It is about the beauties of the human voice as one of the most attractive of musical sounds. The poet expresses his admiration for the height which the human voice can attain. The human voice is the voice of religious choirs singing in church.

The organ of the main instrument used in church music and it is used to accompany choirs.

Notes of religious music inspire holy love. In the last line, the poet is saying that music which is sung in church is so beautiful that when it rises up to heaven it improves upon the music of the choirs of angles in heaven.

In this stanza, the poet is saying that religious music (the music sung in praise of God) is the most beautiful, the reason for this , the poet praises religious music because he wishes to honor St. Cecilia to whom the poet dedicated this poem.

Stanza 6: The poet describes the power of music that could be used for evil as well as for good. He refers to Orpheus (he is a character in Greek mythology), he was banished to the lower reigns. Orpheus had great power to lure and seduce through his music and when he played his lyre he generated great powers.

Savage race: human race.

This refers to the race under the world. Orpheus through the power of his music could lead the creatures underworld.

Uproot: to tear up by the roots.

Because of his great musical power the trees of the underworld were uprooted following the sound of his lyre. This demonstrates that music is a form of energy which could be used for good or evil.

Wander higher: But Cecilia’s musical power was even greater than Orpheus’ and she raised the wonder of music to even greater heights. Her organ it was said that she invented the organ when Cecilia sang to the accompaniments of her organ, an angel heard and appeared before her mistaking earth for heaven.

The significance of this stanza is that it points to the great power of music and what this power could achieve. It could uproot trees (according to Greek legends) or in the case of Cecilia, it could summon an angel.

The other point about this stanza is that the praise which the poet gives to Cecilia as the patron saint of music, the final stanza : chorus is a group of singers who sing together. This poem was written to be sung and the previous stanza were sung by a vocalist (a single singer), but the last stanza is sung by a chorus and the significance of this stanza is that it provides a finale(the last division in a piece of music) to the poem. The significance of this stanza is that it shows the fact that the world was created with harmony and in the day of judgment the harmony of the universe will be destroyed so is the music ( there will be no music), so music is life…

Pope from An Essay on Man

It is a philosophical poem by Pope in which he discusses certain aspects of man’s existence, i.e., Pope’s death and in more details, the concept of heaven and paradise and how it differs between various people. Like the previous poem, this one is a didactic poem written in couplets and it is very clear representation of the didactic aspects of the Augustan poetry.

Lines 1-2: perish: to become destroyed or ruined : die.

He is saying that God sees all aspects of creation impartially whether it is the fall of a great hero or the fall of a small bird.

Lines 3-4 systems : systems of creation.

Atoms: one of the minute indivisible particles of which, according to ancient materialism the universe is composed.

Hurl: push, to throw down with violence.

Bubble: a thin film of liquid inflated with air or gas.

The end of all systems of creation is perdition and God notices every aspect of destruction in creation whether it is the destruction of an entire world or just a bubble bursting.

Lines 5-6. Then : refers to previous line, because of what (lines 3-4) man must hope but this hope must be modest and humble.

Pinion: He is saying that man , in having hope, should be like a bird which flies high, but his wings tremble less he should fall.

Lines 6-7 man should wait for death which is the great teacher at the same time , man should adore God because life is an exercise and man at the end of his life is taught by death what he has done good or bad during his life, death corrects our lives for us showing us the good and the bad points we have done.

Lines 7-8 God does not let us know what future happiness He has in store for us, but He gives hope as the blessing of the present.

Lines 9-10 This is dear, hope always lives in the human heart, man is never blessed at present but always is blessed at future.

Lines 11-12 uneasy: restless

Confines : imprisoned

He is saying that human soul is always uneasy , restless and its only rest is when it goes home to a better life in the future.

Lines 13-20 This is an explanation of the concept of paradise and how it reflects man’s needs and desires in this world. Here he tells the story of a south American Indian whose country had been invaded and robbed by the Europeans (the Spaniards and the Portuguese) and his people were enslaved , these lines show this simple man’s concept of heaven so heave means different things to different people.

You do not need to be educated to know God , a simple uneducated person can know God by instinct and this Indian can see God in the clouds and hear Him in the wind.

Stray: to roam without fixed direction or purpose.

Science or learning has not taught the soul of this Indian to stray away from God.

Line 16: These are constellations of stars.

Science in concentrating on the study of natural objects like the stars deflects man from the adoration of God.

Deflect: to turn from a straight course or fixed direction: bend, deviate.

Line 17: Simple nature/ because the simple person depends on nature , nature has given him hope that there is a humble heaven (paradise) waiting for him nearby, perhaps behind the next hill.

Lines 19-22 the poet describes this person’s idea of heaven, what is paradise to him, heaven to him is some safe sought place embraced in the depth of the woods.

Happier islands: an island where slaves could go back home again.

Line 22 The Europeans invaded these territories in the name of religion but in reality they were after gold. This simple person’s idea of paradise is an island where he can feel safe away from foreign devils and their thirstiness for gold.

Line 23: All he wants is imply to exist in safety, this is his idea of heaven, he asks, he is not very ambitious in his concept of heaven and he does not ask to be in the company of angles.

Lines 25-26 : equal is a significant word, the simple man’s idea of heaven is a place of complete equality between people (because they suffered from racial discrimination)and where he could take his faithful dog. This shows that heaven is merely a reflection of man’s desires and needs in this world. These needs are very simple , he only wants to exist in peace and safety and heaven is the place where he could find such peace and safety.

From An Essay on Criticism

This poem is about writing and literary criticism. Pope was very deeply learned in the works of the classics. He read very deeply the works of classical Roman and Greek poets like Homer , Virgil, Ovid and others. He was very deeply influenced by the literary styles of these classical poets. In An Essay on Criticism, he demonstrates his desire to explain how writers should write and how critics should review the writings of poets. In this poem, Pope demonstrates his debt to these classical authors and he shows the characteristics of the Augustine or the classical school of the 18th century principally by its being deeply influenced by those classical authors whom Pope was influenced by.

Lines 1-2 want: lack

Ill: badly.

The poem was written in couplets(rhyme scheme is aa,bb,cc, dd,…)and it was written in couplets because Pope, in emulation of the classical writers emphasized the modesty in rhyme and he did not approve over sophisticated rhyme scheme. The reasons are: first, it was written in couplets which is a modest and straightforward form of poetry.

Lines1-2 It is very hard to say which shows the greatest lack of skill. To write poetry badly or ,for critics, to review badly the work of poets , which one has less skill than the other?

Line 3: Of bad critics, and bad poets.

Offence: a breach of a moral or social code, sin, misdeed.

Tire our patience: bored us.

Mislead: misguide.

Line3-4: But of the two, i.e., bad poets and bad critics, for a bad poet to bore us with his writing is less dangerous for society than the critic who review the work of the poets badly and thus mislead us(the readers).

The work of critic is even more important than the work of poets and for critics to do his work badly is more dangerous to the society.

Q: Why?

Because the critic could praise a bad poet and thus lower the literary standards of the country. He could also attack and destroy the reputation of a promising and talented poet and thus deprive the society of his talents.

Lines 5-6: err: to make a mistake.

Some poets make mistakes when writing but large numbers of critics make mistakes in their reviews.

Censure: to criticize severely.

Ten critics write reviews which are wrong for every poet whose writings are off the mark: to write literary works out of the purpose of the people.

Lines 7-8 expose: reveal.

One in verse: a fool (who does not know how to write) makes- if a poet writes badly and makes a fool of himself, a writer reveals himself as a fool. This writer makes ten more fools of critics because most critics don’t know how to write reviews and thus make fools of themselves.

Lines 9-10 Our judgment are very dear to us, we only believe our judgments and never the judgments of others just as we believe that our own watches give exactly the right time although no two watches give exactly the right time. He is saying that every critic believes that his own judgment is the right one just as every person believes that his watch gives the right time.

Rare: scares, seldom

Just as a real genius is rare among poets so good taste is very rare among critics.

Lines 13-14 derive :get.

Light: inspiration.

Both critics whose duty is to judge the works of others and those who write must derive their inspiration from heaven. Real writing as well as real reviews of critics should be inspired.

Lines 15-16: Let those inspired poets and critics teach those who already write and critics (inspired critics)should criticize very freely the works of the authors who write well. Why?

A writer who writes well could be improved and the critic who is inspired by God should censure freely the works of the authors so as to improve them further.

Lines 17-18: The poet is saying that authors are in favor of their own wit, they believe that their wit is superior to the wit of others, and critics are also partial to their own judgment and they believe that their judgments are superior.

Lines 19-20: The poet is referring to critics, if we look very closely at the ability of critics, we find that the majority have their basic requirements (the seeds) necessary for literary criticism.

Line 21: glimmering light: the light of talent.

In the next four lines there is a metaphor in which the poet compares the critical work to an artistic sketch picture. Nature has given them some light of talent like the artist to whom he compares those critics. The painter draws the initial lines of his picture correctly but weakly(faintly).

Line 23 But…..

Slight test: a picture in its very first pages.

The poet is saying that an artist may begin his picture by drawing the first line of his picture correctly but if he does not use colors correctly(properly), his picture will be disgraced. Here there is a metaphor with critics , how does this metaphor applies to critics? Bad colors represent bad taste, i.e., it represents inappropriate knowledge and judgments and opinions. The poet is saying that some critics apply inappropriate knowledge, judgment, opinion when they review the work of a poet. They gave some irrelevant and inappropriate in the same way the artist uses colors unsuitably and inappropriately in his paintings. Critics use inappropriate learning when they review the poems of the poets and this ruin their own senses because good sense is the basic in the criticism, like the artist who uses good colors in an appropriate way.

Lines 26-27 schools of criticism in the 18th century . There was a proliferation of different schools , some wrote in the Elizabethan school, others wrote in the 17th century metaphysical school, but what added to confusion is that the new and powerful literary influences coming from France. Which greatly effects literary sense.

Line 26: Most of the critics are confused , they do not know which school they should follow.

Pope did not write sonnets , but poems in couplets. The first aspect of moderation is rhyme.

An excessive imagery , principal aspects of modern age of a didactic era.

This poem is didactic because Pope teaches us how a critic should criticize and how a poet should write.

Coxcomb: a conceited foolish person.

Some writers and critics have a very high opinion of themselves and they think that they are special but in reality, they are fools. The foolish writer is the one who does not know his job.

Line 29: Authors and critics try very hard to be witty but in trying so hard to be witty, they lose their common sense. In loosing common sense, they lose the basic requirement necessary for correct writing and thus they fail.

Line 29: The poet refers to poets who have thereby fail, set themselves of as literary critic to defeat themselves against failure.

Line 30: Those failed poets hate as they rival everyone who writes and those failed poets envy anyone who had genuine wit.

Eunuchs : man who has been castrated (had part of his sex organs removed). Like eunuchs envy lovers.

P. 204 All such have …

Line 1-4 The poet is saying that there are many causes which blinds man’s judgment and mislead his mind, but of all these comes the one that dominates those with the weak mind (weak heads)who are strongly beside of all these , pride is the most loathsome , he describes pride as the vice of fools which never fails them.

Q. Why is the poet of this poem against pride in this context?

Because pride is misleading, pride does not imply merit or talent, on the contrary, pride is often used as a cover for lack of merit ,so the poet lacks pride in the context of this poem because too much people show pride. The poet attacks pride in the context of this poem because too many people driven by pride and only pride set themselves up as poets and critics but without real talents or merits such people only serve to confuse and lower literary standard.

Line 30 He is talking about writers who have failed. The cause of their failure is that they hate everyone who writes well and consider them as rivals, and others: another group of failed writers.

-envy wit: they envy everyone who has literary talent.

Eunuchs: are the main servants in the palaces.

These failed writers envy the writers who have talent like eunuchs.

Q. Why does he refer to those writers?

Because they lower the literary standard of the country and by their malice , they destroy the reputation of talented poets.

-Man’s judgment that is prone to others and it misguides the mind.

Bias: a tendency to be in favor of or against someone or something without knowing enough to judge fairly=prejudice)

Lines 1-4: That the most serious case that blinds man’s judgment and mislead his mind. This cause which rules people with weak minds who are strongly biased. This serious cause is pride which he describes as the vice of fools which never fails them.

Lines 5-6: denied: deprived

Worth: merit

Recruits: doses

Needful: necessary

Whenever nature deprives one of the rare merit, it compensates by giving him large doses of pride which is necessary to fill the vacuum in him, when a person does not have merit, ….

Wants: lacks

Swelled: bloated

The poet is saying in those two lines that just as a person who is weak in his body ,his blood is weak, he will have a weak digestion and because of that he will wind in the same way a person who is weak in soul and cannot digest learning will be swelled with the wind of pride, i.e., he is windy, the important word in this line is “wind”…windy: chatter

The crucial word here is the word “wind”. This is a very clever metaphor because he cannot digest learning, he will become chatterbox.

Q. Why does the poet harp on pride ?

What he says is that the best writer and critic is the one who is inspired so inspiration constitutes the rare merit. When you do not have merit, then you cannot have a genuine literature in his day. Pope found that many untalented people with no vocation for writing set themselves up as writers and critics because they wanted to shine socially and become famous so they were prompted to write by pride and nothing else.

Lines 9-10 void: vacuum

The poet is saying that when a person does not have wit, or when wit fails him, pride steps in for his defense and fill the great vacuum that results from lack of sense.

Lines 11-12 The next two lines are metaphor. The poet is comparing pride to a cloud which hides the light of rason but he says that reason drives that cloud away, then truth will break upon us, reason will break upon us clear as daylight.

Lines 13-14 These two lines are didactic, they instruct and teach. The poet is teaching the person who writes that you must not trust yourself(your own judgment), you must trust your friends and your enemies and you must know your fault. You should not trust yourself because you are involved and your opinion of your own writing is not objective. You must trust friends because your friends will point out the good aspects of your writing and you must show your enemies what you have written because you enemies will concentrate on the bad aspects of your writing and from both you get a balanced picture of your writing . You must quote variation to show that you are an educated person.

The next 4 lines are a proverb.

Pierian spring: of or relating to the region of Pieria in ancient Macedonia or to the Muses who were early worshipped there./of or relating to learning or poetry.

Shallow draughts: sips.

Intoxicate: to excite or stupefy by alcohol or a drug esp. to the point where physical and mental control is markedly diminished.

Sober: not drunk.

The poet says that for an ignorant person to be given a little knowledge is dangerous so when you approach the spring of knowledge, you must not take little sips because that will intoxicate and the only way to be sober is to drink deeply from the fountain of knowledge. The one who does not drink deeply from the spring of knowledge will behave like a fool and a drunkard . The more he drinks, the more sober he will become.

The last 4 lines of P. 204

The poet says that little learning could be dangerous for a writer and a critic because a little learning can lead to pride and overestimation of one’s abilities. These four lines also show the didactic nature of the Augustan school because it emphasizes the need to learn before one writes or before one takes up literary criticism. These lines could be quoted as an example of the didactic aspects of the Augustine school. The rest of the poem is a metaphor comparing a young writer at the outset of his career to a young mountain climber intent on scaling the highest mountain in Europe (the Alpse) for the Himalaya was not known then. The object of this comparison is to show that writing is a long and strenuous profession to master and the comparison with mountain climbing is very appropriate.

Line 19 : muse : this refers to a young writer who starts his career, he says that at first the young writer is fired with enthusiasm when he begins his career, as he believes he is inspired by the god of poetry.

Line 20 The poet is comparing the young writer with the young mountain climber, both are fearless and ambitious and they try to reach the height in their profession.

Lines 21-22 bounded : limited.

The poet is saying that when we start writing as young men, our minds are very limited to what lies a head of us, we do not see the distances we have covered. The key line, when he aims for noble price, wants to reach the top, he does not see the great education he has, the young writer aims very high and his mind is limited to the objective he seeks to achieve , he does not look back and see the great distance he has covered, i.e., the education he had.

Line 23-24 : He continues with the metaphor of the mountain climber, the higher a mountain climber climbs, he sees in surprise that he has yet higher peacks to conquer, to climb and new horizons and new scenes reveal themselves to him. This is a comparison between the mountain climber and the writer, when the climber climbes more, he sees new scenes , the more the writer learns, the more scenes of learning and accomplishment he sees (the nature of this comparison).

Goldsmith The Deserted Village

This poem is very similar to the previous one. We study these poems together because we find more about both of them when we compare one to the other. This poem is also about village life and it describes a village that was once thriving and well-populated but now it is deserted except for a few ghostly characters who still haunt its remains and ruins. This village is called Auburn. It was a village in Ireland where the poet was brought up. It was his home village and the poem is a description og the village as the poet remembered it as a small boy , compared to what he has found it to be, i.e., deserted. The poem begins with a description of the sounds of the village , the poet standing on a hill and he hears the sounds of the village from bellow.

Lines 1-2 oft: often.

Yonder: there.

The poet describes the sounds of the villagers as they rise in the evening up to the hill where the poet is standing.

Line 3: past: passed.

The poet says that I walk by in a slow and leisure way.

Line 4: mingling notes: the mixed sounds.

The sounds of village life come up to him from bellow in the village.

Lines 4-10: in these lines we fine a description of the sounds that come up from the village and these sounds reflect the prosperity of the village. The poet uses sounds to reflect the village prosperity because they are more effective than other means in showing this prosperity.

Line 5: The first sound:

Swain: a young villager usually in love with the milk-maid.

So the first sound that comes up is the sound of the milk-maid singing and the village youth responding to her and the village sound indicates its prosperity.

Q. What is the significance of these sounds?

These sounds are signs of the village prosperity. It shows that the villagers are happy and contented in their life.

Line 6: He describes the herd of cows as they return from pasture to the village and the sounds of the herd as they greet their young calves which are kept in the village. This shows the prosperity because the villager’s prosperity is reflected in its life’s stock.

Line 7: gabbled : cackled.

This line describes the cackling of the geese in the village pool. The noise of the animals are also an indication of the village prosperity.

Line 8: let loose : released.

The poet describes the noisy children and how happy they are to be released from school for the day.

Line 9: The poet describes the village guard-dog as it bays like a wolf to the wind.

Line 10: vacant mind: empty mind.

He describes the loud unintelligent laugh of a simple villager.

Line 11-12: The poet says that all these sounds were mixed in gentle confusion seeking the shade of the evening and filling the gaps between the nightingale. From line 1 to 12 is a description of the village during its former prosperous days.

From line 13 to 24 is a description of the village in its present deserted state. The important point about this poem is the comparison between these two states. This comparison evoke a sense of nostalgia (fondness for something formerly known) and pathos ( an element in experience or in artistic representation evoking pity or compassion, an emotion of sympathetic pity.)for a beautiful thing (a prosperous village) that exists no more but is only a ghost of its former self.

This poem is one of the famous poems. It is important because it talks about a real village, this village was in Ireland and in the 18th century there was a great deal of destruction because the land-owning people wanted to expand , the villagers were forced to leave the village. This village was cherished in his mind.

Lines 13-24 The poet describes the village in its present miserable state.

Line 13 There are no more sounds of habitation in the village.

Line 14: gale: wind.

Now there are no happy and cheerful sounds showing prosperity and contentment and that could be heard even during storms.

Line 15: Here the poet describes the village foot-path and how it is overgrown with grass and how the busy footsteps of the villagers could no longer be heard going back and forth over it.

Line 16: The poet is saying that all forms of life and prosperity which he compares to a blooming red flower has fled from the village.

Lines 17-24: The poet describes the only remaining inhabitants of the village, an old widow. This old widow represents the ghost of the dead village.

Line 17: All forms of life have fled from the village except for that lonely old widow.

Line 18: feebly: weakly.

Plushy: marshy.

The old widow bending weakly next to the spring that is overgrown with water plants and has become like a marsh.

Line 19: matron: a mature woman.

The poet describes how the old miserable widow is forced in her old age to look for bread.

Line 20: to strip: to look very closely.

Brook: stream.

Cresses: water plants.

Mantling: grow very thickly like a mantle, covering…

She looks very closely through the stream which is thickly overgrown with water plants that cover it like a mantle.

Line 21: faggot: a bundle of sticks or twigs tied together for burning as fuel.

Wintery: winter provision (supply).

She looks for her winter store of fire wood, picking it from the thorns.

Line 22: shed: a place use for sheltering.

She seeks her nightly shelter and there she cries till the morning.

Line 23: train: succession.

Harmless train: refers to the villagers who were forced to leave the village one after another and who have not hurt anybody before.

Line 24 pensive: deeply in thought., seriously thoughtful, full of reflections.

The old widow is the one that remained to narrate the history of that sad place(land). The old woman is considered to be the ghost of the village. The villagers died and no one remained except her, she remained like the ghost of the dead person.

The next extract is also a flashback to the village in its former prosperous days. This extract describes the village preacher and how he contributed to the village life. The village preacher was the most important person in the village because he was the only educated person and he helped the villagers through giving them advice and spiritual guidance. This extract is a description of the village preacher , how he lived and how he helped others, his virtues reflected the prosperity of the village because he was virtuous and good and kind. He helped the villagers to prosper.

Lines 25-26:copse: small woodland.

The first four lines describe the sight where the village preacher’s house once existed, but it does not exist anymore. The poet describes the garden near that small wood where once the village preacher’s garden smiled with beautiful flowers and where many flowers still grow in a wild state.

Line 27: torn shrubs: plants.

Disclose: reveal.

Modest: humble.

There we find a few flowering plants. That is where the village preacher’s house once stood.

Line 28: The next extract to the end describes the preacher. He was a man who was loved by all the villagers.

Line 29-30: passing rich: considered to be rich because his annual income was 440 pounds.

Line 31: remote: far away.

Race: the race of people.

He managed the spiritual life of his godly theory (parishioners) away from the towns and all the strives and selfishness of the town.

Line 32: ere: previously.

He had never changed his position as a village preacher before and he never wanted to change it.

Line 33: From line 33 down to the bottom of the page, we have an account of how the village preacher behaved and this behavior reflects many aspects of life in the 18th century as it was shown in Gray’s elegy. He did not have the skill or the ability to fawn on the rich or the powerful or seek for power. This respect is one of the aspects of the 18th century.. The poet is saying here that in the 18th century , in order for someone to advance in his position, he has to fawn the others but the village preacher has no skills or abilities which enable him to flatter the others successfully ( the concept of flattery and class division are revealed here and in the previous poem if we compare them.)

Line 34:doctrine: principle.

The village preacher did not have the necessary cleverness to change his principles according to the fashion of the hour.

Line 35: prize: cherish.

His heart had learned to value other aims in life and to cherish them.

Line 36: bent: return.

He was more determined to raise the standard of the poor and the deprived than he was in raising his own position in life. He was not interested in advancing his own position in life. His heart told him that there are more important things in life which he cherished. He is more interested in helping others.

Line 37: vagrant: homeless.

Train: succession of homeless people.

His house was known to many vagrants who came to his house asking for hospitality and help.

Line 38: chide: rebuke.

He admonished (chided) them for their wanderings and he told them that they must settle down but at the same time, he did what he could to relieve their suffering.

Line 39-40: He refers to people who were given hospitality and helped by the preacher and one of them was the beggar, an old man with a long beard.

Line 41: The ruined spendthrift: means that one who wasted his money trying to seek his fortune. The spendthrift was a well-known character in the 18th century , he usually leaves his hometown or his village and tries to improve his position by seeking favour in the cities, having spent all his money, he returns to his village humbled and penniless.

Line 42: returning to the village, he claimed that he was a relative or he has a relative with the preacher and the preacher accepts his claim.

Line 43: We have another character who is the broken (disabled) soldier who has been released from service without pension and becomes homeless vagrant. This character also seeks the hospitality of the preacher. The preacher offers him hospitality and asks him to stay. He asks the preacher to allow him stay and the preacher accepts.

Line 44 sate: set.

He was set by the preacher’s fire and talked all night.

Line 45: He told sad stories about how he was wounded or (line 46) he describes how the disabled soldier told sad stories about how he was wounded and after his sad stories will be over.

Line 46: He puts his crutch to his shoulder.

Field: field of battle.

Pretending it was a gun and shows him how he won in the battle fields.

Lines 47: He was overcome by his distress and therefore he forgot all his bad deeds and their shortcomings.

Line 48: This line shows that the preacher who was a good man who always felt the sorrow of others and in doing so he forgot all their weak points or shortcomings.

The preacher glows with satisfaction when he meets his simple guests.

Line 49: scan: examine closely.

He did not care about either their merits or their faults and he did not examine them very closely, he was only interested in helping them and in relieving their suffering.

Line 50: His sense of pity was very strong and it begun before his sense of charity begun.

General explanation of the last lines:

The village preacher shows how he contributed very greatly through his witness and charity to the prosperity of the village and that village had been prosperous partly because of his goodness, i.e., the village was happy and contented because it had someone like the preacher living there, giving advice and extended charity and hospitality to anyone who needs it. This extract also shows 29-50 aspects of the 18th century life represented by such characters as the beggar, the disabled soldier and the running spendthrift. These characters were common in the 18th century and they show how someone like the village preacher was indispensable to help the village and to relieve their suffering.

Indispensable: not subject to being set aside or neglected. Absolutely necessary: essential.

Line 51: wretched : miserable.

His pride and joy in life was to help relieve the suffering of the miserable people.

Line 52: failings: points of weakness. What he fails in. Even in his weak points, (what he fails to do) arouse from his virtues.

Line 53: prompt: very quick.

He is carrying out his duties quickly and responded immediately to every call for duty.

Line 54: He watched the villager’s life very closely and wept for their suffering , he also felt for everyone.

Line 55: endearment : expression of love.

Off spring: child or children.

There is a metaphor in which he compares the village preacher to a bird encourages its newly born (young) in every way mainly through expressions of love to try to fly.

Line 57: reprove: to scold or correct usually gently or with kindly intent. / to express disapproval of : censure.

He tries every possible means to encourage the villagers to be better and chided them for doing bad things.

Line 58: He was attractive to other worlds much brighter than this one and he led the way for other villagers towards these worlds.

This extract describes the village school master. The village school master contributed to the village life through his learning and he helped to make the villagers contented and happy and proud of their community.

Lines 1-2 straggling: to wander from the direct course or way: rove, stray., to trail off from others of its kind./proceed that goes in a crooked way.

Skirts: follows

Furz: a kind of bushes which is blossoming flowers.

He describes the fence around the school master’s house and how it is covered with these bushes that blossom with flowers but these blossoms although they are gay but their beauty is of no use because the village is deserted.

Lines 3-4: skilled to rule: he is skillful in ruling the children. These two lines refer to the house of the school master which is full of the noise of the school children and the school master is very skillful in ruling the pupils.

Line 5: severe: hard.

View: to look at.

Stern: having a definite hardness or severity of nature or manner: austere./expressive of severe displeasure: harsh../forbidding or gloomy in appearancr./inexorable./sturdy, stout.

He describes the village school master as a hard man and he is always frowning.

Line 6: truant: a pupil who runs away from school. Here the poet says I knew the school master because I was a pupil of his. I knew him and every pupil who run away from school also knew him.

Lines 8-9: boding: waits for something.

This refers to the pupils who are shaking of fear. He describes how the pupils shook or trembled with fear and could see what disaster awaited them during the day by just looking at their faces in the morning.

Lines 9-19 counterfeited: made in imitation of something else with intent to deceive: forged./insincere, feigned./marked by false pretense : sham, pretended.

Glee: happiness.

The pupils , because they were afraid of him, they were forced to laugh at his jokes but they did not really enjoy them.

Lines 11-12: convey: expressed.

Tidings: news.

When the teacher frowns, nervous whispers go around the class expressing fear that bad news await the class.

Lines 13-14: yet: in spite of the fact that he was a kind man.

Aught: anything.

In sprite of that he was a kind man, if he was severe in anything, it was because his only fault was the great love he had for learning.

Line 15: All the village was unanimous (agrees without exception) agrees that he was a man of great learning.

Line 16: cypher: writing.

In these days to be able to write in cypher means that the writer was an educated man. Everyone was certain that the teacher was a writer and he was skillful in secret writing.

Line 17: He was skilled also in measuring lands and he knew various technical terms and he also knew the tides. (this was an unusual thing in the 18th century)Line 18: gauge: to find out how much there is in something.

He has the ability to know how much there was in anything . This refers to water under land, i.e., he knew how much water under every piece of land. The story run around the village that he knew measurement.

Line 19: parson: the village priest.

In this poem, the preacher and the parson are the same person.

Own: admitted.

The village preacher admitted that the school master was a very skillful in argument.

Line 20: vanquished: defeated.

Even though he was defeated in argument, he could go on arguing.

Lines 21-22: gazing: staring.

Rustics: villagers.

When the school teacher uses long and learned words with sounds like thunder, the simple villagers are astonished as they sit around him staring at him admirably.

Lines 23-24: He says that they keep on staring at him wondering how such a small head as his could carry all that knowledge.

The importance of the village school teacher in this poem is like the preacher’s importance. The village school teacher enriches the village life. The preacher enriches it through his spiritual guidance, charity and hospitality. The school teacher enriches it through his learning . His learning is very deep and it is both theoretical and practical. He teaches the children long and learned words in class but he also helps the villagers in their daily lives by his wealth of practical knowledge, i.e., his knowledge of land measurement, technical terms, tides, etc…

The teacher is important to the village and to the poem because he makes the villagers improve themselves and their community by having such a learned man like him with them. He makes the villagers happy and contented because he gives them what they need, i.e., knowledge. Being simple, uneducated folk, they found his knowledge very valuable, giving them such knowledge makes them happy and contented and it is very important to the poem because it reveals the previous prosperous days of the village and to make a comparison and a contrast between the previous state and its situation now, it is deserted and miserable.

Revision of the poem

There are four main points:

In this poem, there are two parties: the first party is the villagers, theses villagers are very simple folks, they are uneducated and they need every form of assistance and guidance which they can get. They appreciate any such assistance from any quarter. The other party is the most prominent residents in the village, i.e., the preacher and the school master. The preacher offers the village charity, hospitality, spiritual guidance and he is deeply involved in every aspect of the villagers’ welfare. The school master also contributes to the village welfare mainly through his learning. His learning is good and practical . He teaches the children new and magnificent words which they have not heard before, also, he has practical knowledge which is very useful to the villagers. I.e., he knows how to measure lands, he knows various technical terms, the tides, etc… The villagers deeply appreciate his contribution . This gratitude makes them proud of their village and they are happy and contented in their lives. This contentment is reflected in the first part of the poem when the poet describes the village in its former days and how prosperous and contented it was.

The second point is the element of pathos: The sense of pathos is a classic because it succeeds in winning the reader through its fine sense of pathos. The pathos arises from the fact that this village community was once a happy and contented one due mainly to the good effect of its two main residents : the preacher and the school master. The pathos lies in the fact that this happy community had been destroyed and the efforts of the two men were lost mainly because of the outside interest represented by the landowner class who wanted the village land and thus forced the villagers to leave leaving the village deserted. The pathos also lies in the fact that that one villager survived to tell its story to the world, i.e., the poet. The village also now deserted but lived in the poet’s memory and this poem made the village immortal.

The third element is the element of nostalgia. Nostalgia is a very evocative element. Any piece of writing describing early childhood is most likely to find a sympathetic audience. So one of the attractive points is its strong and appealing nostalgia for the days of happy childhood in a village that no longer exists.

The fourth important point in the poem is the description of the two main residents of the village, the preacher and the teacher. These two characters also make the poem memorable. The preacher’s personality is a remarkable one for his extraordinary hospitality and charity. His generosity of sirit is very rare and it is not easily forgotten by anyone who knew him. The school master is also a remarkable character , he appears to be severe and stern but underneath he was kind and very learned. He did what he could to encourage the pupil to love learning and knowledge, mainly through making his classroom and his lessons popular by telling jokes. His contribution to the village generally was also valuable because of his practical knowledge. The personalities of these two men also make the poem rich and memorable. The village preacher is attractive to others . His personality is brighter . he shows the village that there are other worlds . The poet describes the small wood where the preacher’s garden stood but there are some flowers there. The widow is the ghostly character. She represents the village in its present state (comparison of the village and the widow).

The aspect of comparison between the two poems is that both poems reflect the village life in the eighteenth century, describing the village life and describing the gap between the villagers and the land-owning class. Both poems portray the simplicity of the villagers which is highly praised by both poets.

William Blake

He was born in 1755 and died in 1857. He was a revolutionary poet over a wide field social, artistic and philosophical. His poetry is not a record of people or events, but it is a private vision. His poetry is highly symbolic. In his poetry, he gave personification and voice to both abstract concepts like energy and prophesy. He had an immense imaginative power. He considered that man was dismembered by conventional, religious and social codes. He considered man to be naturally good but was corrupted by society. He was corrupted by the harshness and neglect of a very severe society which used conventions to oppress man and deprive him of his natural rights and privileges.

Blake advocated a religion of the imagination which cherished a human wholeness. This wholeness was very comprehensive and included all the aspects of the human existence which had previously been considered to be separate entities like reason and tradition, the physical and spiritual. Blake in his intense private vision sought to unify all these aspects.

Blake did not believe in conventional religious terminology, he did not use the word “God”, he used a special term called “Urizen” which signifies a great cosmic power of great energy and creativity. This novel terminology represents Blake’s intense private vision which is completely self-contained in its terminology. There is a dictionary entitled “ A Dictionary of Blake’s Terms” which interprets the great number of private terms that Blake uses in his poetry. The most important thing about Blake was his symbolism , he is not a literal poet, he uses symbols and offers them to the reader for interpretation.

The Sick Rose This is a poem about a rose which has been blighted by an insect (worm) which has sucked its beauty and its life.

Line 1: The poet is talking to the rose, and he tells her that she is sick. What makes her sick is the worm which cannot be seen. This worm is flying in the night. The poet is talking to the rose and says that you are sick and what makes you sick is an invisible worm and this worm flies around in the night during the storm and no one can see this worm. This worm has made you sick and has sucked away your beauty and your health. In the first part of this poem we feel that there is symbolism. Here the rose represents something else more than just a flower. So we have to interpret the symbols in this poem and when we do so the poem assumes a greater significance.

In the next stanza, the poet proceeds in his symbolism thereby helping the reader along in reaching the main significance (meaning) of the poem. Stanza two : lines 1-2: the invisible worm has found your bed (it refers to the place of the garden in which flowers are grown). The invisible worm that flies in the night has found out the stretch of the garden in which you grow(rose bed) and because this invisible worm is burning with a dark love for you, it has found you out and its secret love has destroyed your life, so here in this poem this is the superficial meaning of it, but when we study it very deeply, we find that there are close parallels with the concept of a ruined young girl. Certain words in this poem like “ thy bed”, “crimson”, “secret love”, all these terms indicate that the poem refers to a pretty young girl who had fallen. The poem in the end refers to a young prostitute and it is an expression of the poet’s human feeling for the ills of his time and his compassion for his fellowmen represented in this case by the young girl whose beauty and life had been destroyed by the evils of lust. This poem is one of the least symbolic of Blake’s poems and the poet’s meaning is quite clear and the reader has little difficulty in arriving at the poem’s real meaning. The next poem is the most famous poem. This poem is also very highly symbolic.

The Tiger This is the most famous poem by Blake and it is more symbolic. It refers to the concept of energy and creativity.

First stanza: Lines 1-2: we have the picture of a tiger that glows very brightly in the forest at night.

Line 3-4: frame: to put in a frame. In the first stanza, the poet is addressing a tiger that glows very brightly in the forests of nights and he asks what immortal power and energy could frame your frightening beauty of form? What eye could frame this beauty. The tiger is beautiful in a fearful way. The poet is wondering who can absorbe in composing this frightening beauty of the tiger.

The second stanza describes a tiger which is fiercely beautiful. He is asking in what deep seas and in what skies did the eyes of the tiger burn? On what wings did the tiger aspire to fly to? What hand has the courage to seize the fire of the tiger? The second stanza is more symbolic than the first, in the first stanza we have the notion of a tiger that glows with beauty that is terrible. In the second stanza, the symbolism is more involved , he is asking in what skies and in what oceans does the eyes of the tiger burn? What are the wings that the tiger seeks to fly by? What hands dare to seize the fire of the tiger? In the second stanza, we find that the tiger is a symbol of universal power and this power is omnipresent everywhere, in the skies and in the ocean.. The tiger here becomes a powerful force that has the ability to fly and its fiery energy could not be touched by human hands. In the second stanza we find that the tiger is merely a symbol to a very great universal energy, what this energy is? Still unclear in this stanza.

The third stanza: art: skill

Sinews: muscles.

In the first two lines, we find that the heart of the tiger is of extremely hard substance that no human shoulder or human skill can in anyway affect or move or twist the hard substance of the tiger. So now we know that the heart of the tiger is made of a very hard substance. In the previous stanza, we know that the tiger is everywhere.

Lines 11-12: when the heart of the tiger begins to beat, it moves its legs, and when the hands and feet of the tiger move, they are very fierce.

Stanza 4: Line 13: He is exclaiming about the hammer and the chain which were used to form the heart of the tiger.

Line 14: He is saying in what furnace was the brain of the tiger formed?

Line 15: He is exclaiming about the anvil. What terrible grasp , he is asking what power can clasp the deadly terror that the tiger is capable of? In this stanza we have a clear indication of what the tiger stands for.

The terms used in this stanza are the terms that are used in forges, i.e., the hammer , the chain, the anvil, the grasp and the clasp. All these terms show that the poet has some kind of workshop in mind, so the tiger is a symbol of a form of energy or power that is generated in a place closely resembling a workshop. So from these four stanzas we find that the tiger is a symbol of some terrible energy that is fascinating both in its terror and in its beauty. We have to try to interpret what kind of energy represented by the tiger is.

Two possible forms of interpretation are: 1- That the tiger represents Urizon , i.e., Blake’s cosmic power or Blake’s God. Blake was fascinated by the power of the deity which he calledUrizon.2-I also could refer to the new form of power, i.e., the power of machinery which was then just invented so here the tiger could stand for the new age of machinery. The repletion of the word “tiger” that shows the intensity of his exclamation.

The brain of the tiger is very power ful entity. No human muscle can affect that very solid thing (heart). The hands of the tiger begin to move and the feet of the tiger begin to move and when they move, they are fearful.

Stanza 5: Lines 17-18: We have to interpret this poem. The stars are heavenly bodies , they are the light of heaven in the night. The stars are also the symbol of gentle light. As such, they are in opposition to the tiger whose energy is very bright and fierce. The star’s light is gentle, the light of the tiger is burning and fierce. So much for the stars. The stars are also the eyes of heaven and as they are the eyes of heaven, they see all, they see everything and because of the ills and the abuses on earth, the light of the stars and the power of the stars to see is compared to spears.

Q. What is the justification for this comparison? The stars are the eyes of heaven, they can see in a piercing way, so the poet compares the ability in the stars to see what is going on on earth h, he compares this ability to the (piercing power) of the spears. The spears could also represent anguish. The stars are anguished of what is going on on earth and even the gentle twilling stars are also outraged by what goies on on earth that their anger is like a spear thrown in anger.

Line 18: The stars watered heaven with their tears. The stars are anguished and outraged by the evils that go on on earth, and because the stars are very gentle, they feel very deeply and the stars cry so profusely that they water heaven with their tears.

Line 19: Here the poet is referring to the creator, the creator is not necessarly God. In Blake’s poems, the creator is Urizon that is his version of God. He is asking when the creator created you, was He satisfied? Did He smile with satisfaction when He created you? When He finished creating you?

He is asking : is the creator who created the lamb the same creator that created you? The tiger is perfect in these qualities (strength, energy, beauty), the lamb is the symbol of gentleness so the lamb and the tiger are in opposite extremes. So why does he ask this question? The reason is that he wonders how the creator can create two such extremes as the lamb and the tiger, the reason why he asks this question is that it appears to him that the creator is contradicting himself by creating the tiger on one hand and the lamb on the other hand. This contradiction is one of Blake’s main obsession. He wondered about the sharp extremes in wealth and poverty in his time. He always wondered why a just and merciful God could condone such inequalities.

Condone: to pardon or overlook voluntarily especially to treat as if trivial, harmless or of no importance.

The significance of this stanza is that it gives greater focus on the energy and power of the tiger by contrasting him to the lamb. It also puts the tiger in a pejorative light. The tiger is associated with ills and abuses and evils that go on on earth and for which the stars waters the heavens with their tears and throw spears down at earth.So the tiger in this stanza appears to us as a terrible beautiful form of light and energy that tilts towards evil rather than good.

Pejorative: having negative connotation especially tending to disparage or belittle: depreciatory.

Disparage: to lower in rank or reputation : degrade./ to depreciate by indirect means (as invidious comparison: speak slight.

Tilt: to cause to slope: incline.

This is shown through the contrast with the lamb which is the symbol of everything that is harmless and gentle. From this stanza, how can we view the tiger? How does the tiger appear to us? Every stanza gives us more description of what the tiger stands for. It interprets a form of terrible energy that is not evil in itself but evil is generated through its operation (if the tiger represents the power of motivation, i.e., the motivation of man to improve himself and to rise and to amass wealth and attain position and power, this in itself is not evil but great many evils are generated through its operation, the evils of dislocation, exploitation, etc…If the tiger represents the power of machinery , machinery itself is not evil but it could be used to generate much evil.

Revision of The Tiger

Blake is a symbolic poet, a poet of symbolism and of great vision. His vision is a very private one and the terminology that he uses is often very obscure. The reader, therefore, is compelled to try to interpret the symbolism. This interpretation could be done within the historical context of Blake’s life and the forces or the influences he was exposed to. During Blake’s life time there were very significant historical developments which gave the impression that man is on the threshold of a new era (age). The most prominent of these historical developments was the French Revolution and its slogans of liberty, equality, egalitarianism and fraternity. The French Revolution had destroyed the old order of divine rights (the monarchy). In the 17th century, it was believed that kings hold their rights directly from God and that the king is God’s shadow on earth, the king chooses the aristocratic class and they enjoy the privileges because they have been given by the king, God’s deputy on earth. The French Revolution had destroyed that by calling for the equality of all men, it released very great forces of human energy and these energies were channeled to both empire building and internal reconstruction.

The other political change was the American Revolution. The American colonies were settlements established by the English emigrants feeling religious persecution in their country. These communities were characterized by egalitarian form of life in which hard-working folks lived together without class distinctions. The American colonies had revolted (rebelled) against the British rule and after defeating the British, they established an independent republic called the united states in America.

Blake was very conscious of the spiritual regeneration released by the new form of government , i.e., the republics of France and America. He saw this as a great spiritual force. Blake was also contemporary of the industrial revolution which released forces of energy hitherto unknown. So in the poem The Tiger, we feel that the tiger represents the concept of released energies in an abstract universe form regardless whether this energy is political, social or mechanical. There are no extracts in the poem, but the poem was written in stanza form.

Every word has certain indication. The poet describes the tiger and in each stanza of the poem, the poet describes the tiger from a new view point. In the second stanza, the tiger has a mystical description . The tiger was not a sinister creature. He is powerful and this power could be used for good or evil. His heart is made of muscles but it is not hard-hearted, but the brain of the tiger is solid and strong.

In the next stanza, the poet describes how the stars wept with what they saw on earth and he asks did the creator who created the tiger create the lamb? The tiger is a symbol of great power when the power of it is used or when it is on operation , it generates distress and this distress causes the stars to weep. It is not the tiger that is evil, it is in itself not an evil force, but the application of its power causes great distress. The use of machines and the conditions of the work lead to suffering. The French Revolution started as a very great idealistic force. Its main purpose is to refuse oppression and to establish new values. These are very noble causes, but when it is applied we find that it is very evil. It generated evil.

The energy of the tiger cannot be recalled. The energy released by the tiger can never be recalled. No one can challenge the authority of the tiger, i.e., no one can challenge the authority of the existence of the revolutionary republicans. The strong point in this poem is its ability to haunt our imagination, it compels us to interpret. It provokes our desires to try to interpret.

The rule of the jungle, the energy released by the tiger transformed human society into a jungle. The tiger lives in the jungle, how could a lamb live in the same place? When the stars throw down their spears, the stars refer to the eyes of heaven that can see all. They see everything that is happening on earth. The stars being gentle are outraged and anguished by the abuses and ills that take place in human society. Their anger at what goes on make them throw their spears of anger at earth in anger so the spears represent both heaven’s anger and they also represent the penetrating ability of the eyes of heaven (the stars), because the stars are so gentle and because they have seen so much evil and depravity on earth that their tears had watered heaven.

Q: Did he refer to the deity?

Urizon is Blake’s personal vision of the creator. Why does not he use the word God?

One of Blake’s characteristics is to invent his own terminology because he believed that the use of the word “God” has been overused by the class which is privileged. He was suffering from the class divisions and he sees the ills of society therefore he used the word” Urizon”.

Q. Did the creator smile with satisfaction when He finished creating you?

The poet is asking did the creator who created the lamb also created the tiger? The lamb is a symbol of gentleness, helplessness and harmlessness. The tiger is extraordinary creature, it is exactly the opposite of the lamb. The tiger is a symbol of furious power and energy which is not evil in itself but in its application it would lead to great evil (the great power of machinery). This is not evil in itself but its application could lead to great evil. The industrial revolution took place during Blake’s time and the factories and machines caused great deal of distress, i.e., the economic problems , the great gaps between wealth and poverty , social dislocation, etc… The next stanza is a refrain from line 21…it is like the first stanza, what is the difference between them? The power of the tiger is unchallenged, it is there to stay, there is no alternative but to submit to the power of the tiger. These interpretations must be valid and must be supported by internal evidences.

The Romantic period

The romantic period covered roughly 50 years, i.e., circa © 1780-1830. The romantic period is generally considered to be a reaction against the classical or Augustine school of poetry which emphasized the need for restraint wisdom, reason and sense. The romantic school reacted against this. It considered man to be a feeler before he was a thinker and man’s feelings are more important constituents of his existence.

The romantic poetry is characterized by the following traits:

1. It is a poetry that displays great deal of sensitivity in feeling, this sensitivity is shown through the great amount of feeling that is concentrated in describing what may seem ordinary everyday objects. In this sense, romantic poetry is a reaction against the Augustine poetry which upheld reason and sense and downgraded very severely the importance of human feelings.
2. Its upholding the importance of nature. Nature is a very important constituent generally speaking of romantic poetry. The romantic poets idealized nature. They considered nature to be a source of goodness and creativity which should be closely studied and man should avail himself of this goodness and creativity by studying nature and living closely to it. Some romantic poets like Wordsworth saw nature as a source of great mystical power and that nature spoke a language of its own and those who lived close to nature like simple farmers, shepherds etc… were endued with this wise and good simplicity of nature.
3. The association between strangeness and beauty. The romantic poets generally chose subjects and endued such subjects with a great deal of their personal feelings. This made their poetic subject look strange and beautiful at the same time. For example, Wordsworth described a village idiot with a great deal of affection and understanding. John Keats also described common objects like a Greek urn with great deal of feelings. It is these feelings given lavishly endued common every day objects with great deal of beauty. So we can describe romantic poetry as the poetry of common objects made beautiful in a strange way by the lavish feelings given in describing them.

N.B., nota bene

Romantic poetry is not the poetry of love. The romantic poets are : Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Keats. Sometimes Blake is included in the romantic poets but for the present purpose he is excluded.

English romantic poetry was influenced by a number of currents. These currents are:

First The gothic novel in England and Germany. The gothic novel is a novel which describes an atmosphere of fear and mystery usually within a background of old castles so the gothic novel serves to excite feelings and the imagination. This was a considerable influence on romantic poetry with its emphasis on feeling and imagination. In England there was a fashion for the gothic novels.

Second The influence of the French revolution. This was a very significant influence on romantic poets generally because it was the most powerful force yet liberating human feelings and emotions. Its slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity stirred the imagination of the romantic poets. The French Revolution destroyed an older order which many thinkers considered to be oppressive. The thinkers of the French Revolution considered society and its institutions to be merely tools used by the rich to oppress the poor so the French Revolution excited feelings of liberation which the romantic poets considered to be very welcome and important and they made use of them in their poetry.

William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth was born in 1770 and died in 1850. He was born in Lake District. This area is of great scenic beauty and it is this beauty which first installed in Wordsworth his love for nature. He spent great deal of time as a young boy playing in the hills and valleys of this area, so his delight in nature at this early stage was characterized by boyish delight and innocence. He went to Cambridge and during that time he was endued with revolutionary idealism and fervency. It was the time for the French Revolution but when he went to France, he was shocked and disappointed by the excesses of the reign of terror. This was an episode in the Frecn Revolution when many executions placed. In France, he met the daughter of a royalist surgeon, her name is Annette Vallon, he had an affair with her and she gave birth to a baby girl.

The terror of the French Revolution greatly disturbed him. It affected him almost mentally. On his return, he found a very great relief in nature. At this stage, it was a sort of comfort and convalescence. He begun to study nature very closely and he developed his pantheistic views of nature. Of all the romantic poets, he concentrated on nature most and he theorized the several concepts of it. As a man, he was very solomn but he was reclusive and he tended to be short-tempered and arrogant but he was capable of forming very deep and loyal friendships. The most famous of these is with Coleridge and he cooperated with Coleridge in produsing a joint volume which is called Lyrical Ballads. Wordsworth’s ideas on nature are fully expounded in the preface to The Lyrical Ballads. He wrote a great deal of poetry and his poetic works include: The Prelude, The Recluse, The Excursion.Much of this poetry is second rate and in his last years he wrote very little.

Tintern Abbey was a ruined monastery but it was a very picturesque place. Wordsworth wrote this poem during a walking tour with his sister Dorothy , the tour took three days and they covered 50 miles. Wordsworth was very energetic walker. This poem is one of the most famous by Wordsworth for two reasons:

First because it was composed under circumstance which he remembered as being very pleasant. He wrote that no poem of his was written under circumstances was more pleasant, therefore, it contains a great deal of his most life-loving feelings. Second, the poem brings out all the main points about Wordsworth’s love for nature. In this sense, the poem is autobiographical and it shows us the various stages of the development of his concept of nature.

Another characteristic of Wordsworth’s poetry is the simplicity of language. Wordsworth believed that nature poetry should not be written in the higly polished language of the educated but in the simple language of the country folk. So we find that this poem is a landscape poem written in a simple language that is almost like prose. In his description of nature, Wordsworth relied more on sensory observation more than rational principles.

Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood

It is an extract from another poem by Wordsworth. Wordsworth believed that children had a wisdom of their own because their perceptions are pure and clear and untainted by the experiences of the world. He wrote that “ the child is the father of the man.” , i.e., the wisdom of a child is in a way superior to the wisdom of the adult man. This poem deals with the clarity of the soul and the nature of the soul and how it guides man in life and how it is a unique entity and how it is separate from the body. So this poem is a spiritual poem and its main theme is the human soul.

Line 1: The poet is saying that our life when we are born to life, our existence is only a kind of sleep and forgetting. He means that the soul had previously led a much higher existence than that of life on earth and that our life on earth compared to that existence is like sleeping. Our souls led a much more active existence in other worlds. Our actions are just dreams, our life on earth is not real compared to a previous life that our souls have led.

Line 2: He describes the soul. It rises with man at his birth. The soul is the star of our life; the star is a guide. He compares indirectly life to a sea-voyage. Navigators rely on the stars and so man relies on his soul to guide him through life.

Line 3: He means that our souls had already set in a previous time. Souls are not born with us, but has existed elsewhere and had come to enhabite our bodies at birth. This idea is a platonic idea. Plato believed that the human soul is “ a spark of divinity” that is thrown away from the great soul of God and that at death this spark returns to the great soul of God.

Line 4: He is speaking about the nature of the soul and he is saying that the soul rises with man at birth but it already had a previous existence and it is like a sun that rises and sets so the soul is not created specifically for every individual but it had already a previous existence and when man is born it rises with him in life and guides him like a star.

Lines 4-6: He describes the nature of the soul in lines 5-6 that the soul comes from a remote existence but it does not come to inhabit man’s body utterly naked and forgetful but it comes full of the glory of God and the glory that man is capable of achieving.

Line 7: The soul comes full of the potentialities that man is capable of realizing. The soul comes from God who is “Our Home”. This is a reference to the platonic idea that the home of the soul is God. The platonic concept of the soul stresses the point that the soul is “ a spark of divinity” which is thrown off from the great soul of God to inhabit man at birth.

Line 9\*: The poet means here that during infancy, the human soul is still fresh and bright with a light of heaven from which the soul had recently arrived and therefore, the infant is full of the light of heaven. The importance of this line is that it reflects the poet’s views about the superior wisdom of the child,” the child is the father of the man.” This wisdom is reflected in the fact that the child’s perceptions are very clear and through this clarity it perceives truth much more directly than the adult whose perceptions are clouded by his will and the cares and worries of the world (line 10).

This poem is a complementary to the previous poem because the themes are closely related. In this poem, he talks about the human soul. The child still retains the light of heaven and because of that, the child can see clearly more than the adult. As he grows older (lines 10-11), he will be preoccupied by his problems, his position in society, his sexuality, all these preoccupations diminish the light of the soul. The child is wiser than the adult because of the spark of heaven that he has. The adult has his own will to make money, to defeat his enemy so these worldly interests cloud this light of heaven, so the child is superior than the man because he has clear perceptions.

Line 10: He describes man who loses this light as he grows older.

Prison-house: is his body and the world also is a prison. Prison-house is either the world which presses upon man with its demands and worries, so as the infant grows into boyhood, the shades of the prison close on him. The prison is his own will, his own sexuality and his own problems, he begins to lose the freedom and the light of heaven.

Lines 12-13: This light is not entirely lost. The boy sees it in his moments of joy. This is a reference to the poet’s own joyful experience in nature when he was a boy. Nature gave him a great deal of joy and the joy of nature makes him see this light of God he was born with.

Line 14: The east refers to the star in the east. This refers to the nativity. \*\*The three men who are wise. They were great astronomers, they travelled from the east to Palastine where Jesus was born. They travelled by the great star of the east so “east” is the rising of the sun. The young boy everyday as he gets older, he moves away from the east which is the source of light ( the light of the sun) and the eastern star.

Line 15: The young boy must travel in life away from the east, away from the light which was in him ( the source of heavenly light). As man grows older, he loses the light he was born with.

Line 15: “ still is nature’s priest”

He worships nature and adores nature like the priest who worships his God. The man as he grows older is still worshiping nature. So nature becomes a substitute for the loss of the spark of divinity which man was born with, so man turns to nature for comfort and for guidance and for instructions to substitute for the light of heaven he was born with and which he gradually loses as he grows older.

Lines 16-17: It is the vision of nature seen through the light of God in him. This light attends him through his life.

Line 18: As he grows older, this light which is his soul finally dies away and loses itself in the light of the day.

The important points about this poem

It shows us the poet’s concept of the soul “platonic concept”.

It shows the relationship between the human soul and nature as the poet saw it.

This poem complements the ideas of nature given in the previous poem, so these two poems should be studied together very closely and a close comparison should be made between them.

Q. Discuss how the poet saw the human soul and nature in both of thes poems.

The poet saw certain significance in nature which no other poet sees. Wordsworth is a very reclusive man, he lived in nature and he describes this presence in nature so his poetry tends to be very introspective poetry.

Revision of Wordsworth

The two poems complement one another and they should be studied together. The first poem Lines Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey discusses his concept of nature and the two phases during which he formed his impression about nature. The second poem the Immortality Ode discusses the concept of the soul and the poet’s ideas about the soul which are essentially a platonic concept.

The concept of the soul in the second poem the Immortality Ode could be applied to both phases ( the first phase and the second phase) of Wordsworth’s concept of nature in the poem Tintern Abbey . The first phase in Tintern Abbey deals with how the poet viewed nature in his boyhood. In the second poem The Immortality Ode, the soul during childhood is still full of the heavenly light which it retains after birth so in the first phase the poet enjoyed nature immensely because his soul was still full of heavenly light and luminosity. That is why he enjoyed nature so intensely during his boyhood because the heavenly light in his soul saw in nature a reflection of the light of heaven.

The second phase of the poet’s concept of nature during his maturity. We find that the joys in contemplating nature had greatly diminished because the light of heaven in his soul, the spark of divinity had lost most of its luminosity and also because the world and all its cares and worries and the prison of his body cast great deal of shadows on his perceptions (see the Immortality Ode) , that is one way in which we can compare the first and the second poem.

Wordsworth enjoyed nature as a boy because his soul is still pure and still has the heavenly light, in the second phase, he became a mature man and he viewed nature in a different way. “ It reflects the sad music of humanity.” The soul of the second poem could be applied to the theme of nature in the first poem.

The second way in comparing the first poem with the second is the presence which the poet felt in nature. In the Immortality Ode, lines 14-15, the poet says that as the youth grows older, daily travels further away from the east, he becomes nature’s priest, he begins to attend and worship nature as a priest worships God. If we apply this on the first poem, because he studied nature and attended nature very closely as a mature man, he begun to feel this presence of nature which stimulated his thought just like a priest who attended his deity. He is inspired by his worship and the deity stimulates his feelings and thoughts. The presence is a form of pantheism.

The concept of the soul. There is a close relationship between the concept of the soul as given in the Immortality Ode and the concept of nature.

Q. What is the relationship between the concept of the soul and the concept of nature?

Both the soul and nature are related to God, both reflect the spirit of God, that is why poets and prophets find in nature an inspiration. The soul is related to God because it is a spark of divinity, nature is also related or reflects God through the “ presence” which the poet feels in nature. This presence is a pantheistic presence. It affect all thinking creatures. It stimulates though. It inspires, it speaks the language of God. The soul in its infancy is bright with the light of heaven . As the soul grows older, the shades of the prison “ the body, the world: diminished its luminosity and therefore the poet resorts to other sources of divine light, i.e., nature.

Q: How is all this part of the romantic poetry?

In the first poem (lines 7-8), he loved nature through his senses. Tomantic poetry is the poetry of sensitive feelings as they are aroused of perception through the senses. I saw nature, I lived it, it stimulates my feelings and all these feelings of love are not supplied by exterior thinking, but only through the eyes so his feelings of nature are only aroused through his senses.

His above discourse about the relationship between the soul and nature is romantic because it all arouses through the perception of nature through the senses, i.e., 1- the poet saw and heard nature. 2-He was affected by what he saw and heard. 3-This effect stimulated his thoughts about nature 4-He begun to theorize about the significance of nature.

Lines Composed Afew Miles About Tintern Abbey

Lines 1-2: cataract: small waterfall.

The sound of the waterfall was always in my mid and it haunted me like a strong emotion.

Lines 2-5: He is describing his love and attachment to nature when he was a boy. He describes how the sound of the cataract affected him very deeply like a strong emotion ( like the emotion of love, hate, envy, etc…). This shows us how deeply he felt for nature and his feelings were as deep as the feelings of someone who loves, or hates. It is very deep.

Then he describes various aspects of nature, rocks, mountain, wood and how he had an appetite for it.

Lines 5-8: He describes this appetite for nature as a love and a feeling that arouse only from what the eye could see and it was not borrowed from any other source.

Q. Wordsworth is a romantic poet and when we study romantic poetry, we have to study the aspects of the romantic poetry. This poetry is the poetry of deep feelings. A person feels through his senses, so the romantic aspect here is represented by the strong feelings which arouse in the poet through his senses of sight and hearing, because he heard the small waterfall and it affected him very deeply like a passion. He saw the beauty of nature, woods, mountains, etc….What he saw stired his feelings. A person has very deep feelings when he hears a beautiful song, it stirs his feelings so he cannot forget what he saw or heard, also when he tastes something very delicious, it stirs his feelings. So the poet is a romantic poet, his feelings are very rich and sensuous and what his feelings perceive arouses him very deeply.

Line 8: The way he felt from line 8 is all in the past so these lines refer to his feelings towards nature when he a boy, when he was innocent and pure and uncontaminated by the experiences of the world so in the first 8 lines, his feelings were very strong, pure and vigorous.

Line 9: Now I feel for nature in a different way.

Aching joys: this shows the strength of feeling for nature. Nature gives him so much joys that he was ached but all this is in the past, he cannot feel the same joys now as he did then.

Lines 10-11: dizzy: having a whirling sensation in the head with a tendency to fall./mentally confused.

Rapture: a state or experience of being carried away by overwhelming emotion., a mystical experience in which the spirit is exalted to a knowledge of divine things/ an expression or manifestation of ecstasy or passion: ecstasy.

Although I have lost all these joys, I do not complain, and I don’t feel sad because other gifts have followed.

Lines 12-13: He says : I don’t complain or reject the loss of these joys because I have been given other gifts which have followed this loss and these gifts are more than it is an adequate compensation for the loss that I have felt ( my loss).

Lines 13-16: here the poet is describing how he has learned to view nature, now in his mature years, he views nature in a way which is different from how he viewed nature when he was young and thoughtless. Now when he views nature, he hears the sad music of human existence ( this is due to his painful experiences in France and in life generally), so now when he looks on nature, he sees in it a reflection of human existence and all its sorrows.

Lines 17-18 ample: plenty.

Chasten: to correct by punishment or suffering: discipline.,/to cause to be more humble or restrained: subdue.

Subdue: to conquer or bring into subjection: vanquish, to bring under control especially by an exertion of the will: curb.

The poet is describing life and the sadness of life, he describes it as being not cruel and not painful or grating. Life is sad but it is not cruel and painful , it has the ability to correct man and put him in his right place and restricts his exuberance.

Lines 18-19: These lines describe an important aspect of Wordsworth’s views of nature. When I am close to nature, I feel certain presence and this presence moves me and makes me think in a very sublime way.

Line 20: He explains this presence, he describes it as: this certain presence dwells in the light of the setting sun, this presence dwells in the suns that set in the evening and the round ocean and the living air and the blue sky and in the mind of man.

Lines 20-24: the poet tries to explain this certain presence in nature and how it lives in the sun and the sky and in the mind of man and he describes how this presence moves him. These lines reflect the element of pantheism in Wordsworth’s concept of nature and it explains how he saw in nature a deeper significance than mere picturesque landscape.

Line 25: The poet is talking here about the spirit in nature and how it affects the mind of man and makes him think, he describes it as :

Impels: earges.

Lines 25-27: He describes this presence as pervading all aspects of nature and is found everywhere and it is this which makes man think. This is a reference to the poet’s pantheism which implies that God is found everywhere and it is this presence which affects his thought.

Line 27: “therefore” is the important word, that is because of this presence that pervades nature and because of this presence that pervades nature and earges man to think, that is why I still love nature. In another word, he does not love nature as he did when he was a boy as a merely a place to play in, now he loves nature because it makes him think.

Line 29: beheld: see

Therefore, I still love the meadows and the woods and everything green in nature.

Line 30: The world of the eye is might and the world of the ear is mighty because the eye and the ear can create powerful worlds of their own, this is a romantic line in the sense that the senses of sight and hearing are very powerful.

Line 31: half create: refers to the eye. The eye half creates and the ear perceives. The eye sees what is already there, the eyes see what is there and after it sees it, it creates from what it sees. Therefore, it only half creats, the ear hears everything, but the eye sees only the outward appearance of things.

Lines 32-36: Here he decribes how he feels about nature. Nature to him is almost indispensible so nature to him is very important because it speaks the language of the sense. This is a very romantic line.

Line 34: Because nature gives his thoughts stability. Nature is the nurse and the guide and the guardian of his heart and his soul and of all his moral being. So from these lines we find how important nature to him is, he is totally dependent on nature for his being, he can’t live without nature, so from these lines we find how he loves nature, he describes how he loves it.

Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born in 1792 and died by drowning in 1822. He was the most impetuous, wildly revolutionary and most idealistic of the romantic poets. He came from an old gentry family , he went to Eton college and was affected by the violence of the fagging system prevailing in English public “ private” schools. In England, the very exclusive five schools are very illogically called “public schools”. In these schools, we have certain systems, when a boy comes for the first times, he is tested by other students, he is insulted and bite when he comes, the purpose of this is to teach the boys the virtues of humility and this is part of the English system. The object of this is to train the boy to be administered and to make him feel how it is like to be under someone else’s control and to make respect others.

Shelley was a very sensitive boy and he heard the crying and the screaming of other boys who were insulted and bullied. Shelley was shocked by this treatment and he became violently abhorrent to the system of oppression which he saw in the society.

At school, Shelley read two sources which greatly affected him. The first book he read was William Godwin’s Political Justice, Godwin, in his book, believed that society and state were designed to oppress man who was born naturally good but who was deprived of his goodness by the oppressive institutions of the society. Godwin believed that the only salvation of man was to abolish state and society and to allow man to live naturally in nature. Godwin’s book affected most of the romantic poets. Wordsworth’s concept of nature was influenced by Godwin but it was Shelley who derived most of his reforming zeal from Godwin. Shelley became an ardent reformer. He believed that society was oppressive and that much have to be done in the way of reform.

The second source he read at school was Plato. He read two of Plato’s dialogues, The Symposium and The Phidao. Plato was a great philosopher. His works consisted of a number of dialogues. These dialogues consists of conversation between people. Each of his books consisted of a conversation on philosophical subjects. From these two dialogues, Shelley learned about good and evil and about the nature of the soul. Shelley believed that man was born naturally good and that evil is a mere accident which obstructs the natural goodness of man.

Symposium: a convivial party( as after a banquet in ancient Greece) with music and conversation./a social gathering at which several specialists deliver short addresses on a topic or on related topics.,/a collection of opinions on a subject, especially one published by a periodical, discussion.

Obstruct :to block or close up by an obstacle./to hinder from passage, action or operation: impede./ to cut off from sight.

His zeal continued at Oxford and it got him into troubles. He was expelled from university. He started to write a pamphlet which was entitled The Necessity of Atheism. He went to Italy and at the death of his grandfather, he inherited great deal of money which helped to secure his financial independence. He died drowning while swimming in the sea. Shelly wrote long political works Queen map , The Revolt of Islam, Cenci ,Julian and Maddleo and other works.

Ode to the West Wind is one of his shorter poems. We study it for two reasons, first because it expounds the concept of nature, second it reflects much of Shelley’s beliefs.

Expound: to set forth: state., to defend with argument, to explain by setting forth in a careful and often elaborate detail.

The poem

First stanza: In the first line the poet addresses the west wind during a stormy afternoon near Florence. In this line, he describes the west wind as wild. We sense a power of liberation in the wildness of the wind which he describes as the breath of autumn. We feel how he admires this season.

Line 2: From your unseen presence, the dead leaves are swept away before you like ghosts. He is telling that from the power of your unseen presence the dead leaves are swept away like the ghosts of the dead people that are exorcized.

Exorcize: to expel (an evil spirit) by adjuration./ to get rid of (something troublesome, menacing or oppressive), to free of an evil spirit. Evil spirits take hold of the human soul so he behaves in an evil way and in this case the priest comes to drive away evil spirits (exorcize evil spirits) and this is one of the rites which are practiced till now. An enchanter exorcizes the ghost of the dead and the west wind drives away the dead leaves from the trees. From the first stanza we feel that Shelley has a desire for a vigorous and unseen power to drive away all that is useless and dead in the world and in the society. This explains his admiration for the west wind. He admires its wild power to sweep away all that is useless and dead. So autumn is the season where the remains of what is dead in nature are swept away by the west wind. This indirectly shows the poet’s yearning for a vigorous unseen power that would do away with everything that is old, dead and useless.

Stanza 2: Line 4: The poet is describing the leaves and their colors.

Hectic : feverish.

Pestilence: contagious or infectious epidemic disease that is virulent and devastating./something that is destructive or pernicious.

Multitudes: crowds.

In these lines the poet compares the leaves in their various colors to crowds that have been stricken by pestilence.

Line 5: thou: refers to the west wind.

Chariotest: this is a word coined by the poet. Chariot is an ancient militaty vehicle used in warfare in ancient times. It was very fast and designed to scatter infantry formations, so the west wind here is like a chariot fast and effective in dispersing the fallen leaves which he compares to enemy soldiers and sends them to their wintery grave . From this stanza we find that the poet yearns for everything that is effective and vigorous in sweeping away everything that is dead and useless. This notion reflects Shelley’s vigorous reforming zeal.

Third stanza:

Lines 7-8: Here the poet refers to the seeds that lie still as if they were in a grave.

Line 9: thine: you: the west wind.

Azure: blue.

This refers to the spring breezes which he describes as blue reflecting the color of the sky and this is continued in the next stanza.

Stanza 4: clarion: trumpet.

Dreaming: the earth during spring time.

The seeds will remain like corpses in their graves until the west wind blows in the spring and scatters the buds and seeds into the air and these buds are compared to flocks that feed in the air.

Line 12: hue: color.

When the west wind blows the buds and the seeds into the air, the plains and the hills become alive with living colors. The significance of stanza 3 and 4 is that : the west wind becomes another extension of the earth, it is alive with the odors and the colors of the flowes. Also, these two stanzas show that the wind is more than just air that moves. It is an aspect of nature just like the earth, as the earth blooms in spring, so the west wind blooms also with buds, colors and smells which it carries with it.

The wind helps to pollinate the flowers and the plants by carring the seed and the buds and making life grow again. The wind is symbolic of Shelley’s desire for creative reform, i.e., a reform that destroys and sweeps away everything that is dead and useless and also a reform that creates and gives and makes life proliferate. This is reflected in the next stanza.

Pollinate: make fertile with pollen.

Pollen: fine powder 9usually yellow) formed on flowers which fertilize other flowers when carried to them by the wind, insects, etc…

The fifth stanza : Line 13: He calls the wind a wild spirit.

Q. Why does he call it a wild spirit?

He calls it wild spirit because Shelley is an admirer ,a lover for life in its basic forms, he loves everything that is alive. So he calls the west wind “wild” because the wind represents the energetic love for life which the poet so deeply admires. He calls the west wind a wild spirit. This reflects a pagan notion. The pagan people considered every aspect of nature to have its own spirit. The mountains have their own spirit, the seas, the forests, etc… have their spirits. These spirits are unique to each aspect of nature. By calling the west wind a wild spirit, the poet also reflects his yearning for a spirit that is much alive which will destroy and sweep away everything that is putrescent and useless in life so he calls the wind a wild spirit.

Putrescent: undergoing putrefaction: becoming putrid: rotten.

Lines 13-14: This stanza represents Shelley’s notion of the wind, i.e., it is a vigorous untamed spirit that destroys the bad and the useless and preserves all that is good and fruitful.

Line 14: He is asking the reader to imagine the sound of the wind. He is asking the reader to listen to this spirit, to try to understand what the spirit is saying , to communicate with it. This stanza is a good example of the romantic poetry because the poet is asking the reader to whet his feelings so as to understand and to communicate with the wind and thereby to become close to the spirit of nature in a pagan sort of way.

The second stanza : Revision

The poet describes the leaves driven by the wind. He compares the leaves to crowds of people that have been stricken by disease. We notice how he compares the leaves in all their colors to crowds that have been struck by pestilence, i.e., a person struck by contagious disease changes color and become feverish.

Line 6: Chariotest: this is a word coined by the poet. Chariot is a kind of war-vehicle used by the ancients in warfare. He is talking to the west wind and says : you drive the dead leaves to their wintery bed just like a chariot which scatter the enemy soldiers. This stanza reflects the poet’s desire to do away with everything that is dead and useless and it is symbolic of the poet’s desire for vigorous and sweeping reform.

The third stanza: Line 7: This stanza reflects another aspect of the wind. The wind drives the seeds and scatters them over the face of the earth so the seeds fly with the winds.

Lines 7-8: He says that the seed lie cold until you (the west wind) drive them and they fly before you and before you blow them, they were like corpses in their graves.

Line 9: The west wind’s sister that blows in the spring: He describes the sister wind as being blue because during springtime the sky is clear and blue. These stanzas (2-3) are symbolic of the poet’s desire for both destroying the old and infirm and the useless and to replace it with everything that is vigorous and creative and life-giving.

We can read this poem in two way: first romantic, there are sensitive feelings which are lavished on a subject that is common, but the poet’s imaginative power gives this subject a new aspect. The wind now assumes a new significance . This subject made nice because the poet’s imagination makes this subject nice. Second, it deals with an aspect of nature. All romantic poets love nature. They consider it as a store house of value and significance.

The second way : the symbolic way. The wind symbolizes the most pronounced and prominent of Shelley’s urges, i.e., the desire for vigorous freeform. Shelley was a person who was very much alive, he loved life in all its forms so by nature, he was qualified to deal with such a phenomenon like the wind and that is why this poem is a good poem because the poet is qualified by his nature and temperament to describe nature. Byron’s poem is a good poem because the poet is particularly qualified to write a love poem, he was a womanizer. Coleridge could not describe the west wind very good because he was indolent and he has a lethargic nature , so his poems reflect his nature. In this poem, the wind symbolizes the poet’s deep desire to get rid of everything that is useless. Also the poet writes on this subject because the wind fits his nature and it fits his beliefs.

The fourth stanza: The wind drives the buds into the air. The poet compares these buds to flocks that graze in the air. The wind appears to us as a power that is not only moving the air, but it has another existence on the earth, just like the flocks that graze in the pasture in springtime, so the air is full of buds which fill the plains and the hills with their colors and odors.

The symbolis here is that the wind carries the colors and the sweetness of the earth with it and so we realize another aspect of the wind which might have escaped our notice. The symbolism in this poem is best represented in the second stanza and it reflects the poet’s desires. He describes the wind as a wild spirit. “wild” is used in admiration. He admires the wind because it is wild. This reflects the poet’s admiration for everything that is vigorous, untainted and totally free from the whole shackles.

Q. Why does the poet admire the wind as wild?

Shelley was a revolutionary poet. He considered society to be oppressive. Society shackles man and deprives him of the natural goodness that he was born with and because of this man becomes mean, trivial and servile. All these are evils so the poet admires the wildness of the wind because it presents the vigorous primeval energy which man in society has been deprived of. He also describes the wind as a spirit.

Q. What is the significance of describing the wind as a spirit?

The wind being a spirit is a pagan notion. The pagan people considered every aspect of nature to be unique with its own individuality and spirit, i.e., the spirits of the elements of nature. It is a pagan concept and the romantic poets in their admiration and closeness to nature resembled pagan peoples. The wind is unrestrained and free, it blows wherever it wills. This freedom deeply appeals to the poet.

The fifth stanza Line 13-14: The poet is asking the reader to hear the wind and to try to communicate with the wind because he wants to heighten the reader’s sensitivity. He wants the reader to be like himself, i.e., to communicate with nature by wheting his feelings and raising his sensitivity.

The sixth stanza: streams: currents.

Thou: the west wind.

Commotion: disturbance.

Tangled: interwoven.

In this stanza, the poet addresses the west wind and says that your currents heighten in the sky shake loose the clouds into rain just as you shake the decaying leaves out of the trees. In the last line, the poet compares heaven and the ocean to the interweaving of the boughs of the trees. Heaven and the ocean are interweaving like the boughs of the tree. The poet compares heaven and the ocean to the boughs of the tree. The wind arises from the closeness of heaven and the ocean . Heaven and the ocean interact with one another to produce wind currents. The element of romanticism here is that the poet shows the reader that nature is a unity. The aspects of nature interact with one another to produce other aspects.

Line 18: The poet says that the angles of the lightning and rain ride up high on the flow of your blue air (blue reflects the color of the sky). This reflects the point that the wind is not just a moving air. It is a spirit. It is an entity. It is full of mythological significance. Angles ride high on the air. The poet is showing the reader that the wind is much more than a moving air.

The eighth stanza: Maenad: a woman participant in orgiastic Dionysian rites: Bacchante./ an unnaturally excited or distraught woman.

Zenith : the highest point in the sky.

In these two stanzas, the poet is saying that the currents of the air rising up in the sky are the locks of hair of the approaching storm. We notice here that the poet is talking about the mythological creature so the storm is composed of the currents of air which are like the hair of Maenad.

Lines 23-24: The poet says that the storm is like a dirge chanted to mourn the dying year. From this stanza we find that the west wind turns into a stormy weather at the end of the year as if it is stricken for the death of the year.

Line 25: The poet compares the night to the dome of a great sepulture and this dome is built with the power generated by the wind. This shows the power of the wind. The wind supports the vaulting of the night. The poet compares the night to a vault and the storm becomes like a support of the night. The wind is not just a moving air, it can generate a great power that can hold the dome of the night.

Revision The poem is romantic because the poet lavishes his fine and sensitive feelings and his imagination on a very common phenomenon, i.e., the wind. His feeling and imagination make this common phenomenon much more alive and wonderful and full of significance. Every stanza of the poem tells us something new and interesting about the west wind so the poet succeeded in creating a new and exciting subject out of a hitherto unnoticed aspect of nature.

Furthermore, the west wind tells us much about the poet. The poem is a good poem because the west wind is a very accurate representative of both Shelley’s nature and temperament. Shelley was a lively man. He adored life in its most vigorous and unrestricted forms. The wind represents his love for life. The wind is free, it is untamed it has a magnificent wilderness. All these are characteristics which Shelley admired. The wind also represents Shelley’s convictions. He was a wild idealist with vigorous and sweeping desire for reform. The wind represents his desire for reform and his desire to do away with everything that is useless, ineffectual and infirm and to replace it with everything that is fruitful, creative and lively (notice his description of the dead leaves and the scattering of the seeds). In this poem, the wind represents symbolically Shelley’s convictions. Shelley was well-qualified by nature to write on this subject because the wind represents very accurately his temperament.

George Gordon Byron : He was born in 1788, died in 1824. His father a dissipated and debauched Scottish aristocratic man who squandered his wife’s property. Byron was the son of a second marriage. At school, he showed little promise and he inherited his father’s worldliness. Byron was himself a worldly man , an adventurer and womanizer. He had many affairs and one of mistresses described him as “ bad, mad, dangerous to know”. The two basic features of his life were: 1-his worldliness, 2-a deformity of the foot he was born with. In spite of numerous operations he suffered from this deformity throughout his life, but he overcame it and was known as an excellent swimmer.

Byron’s character was one of extreme narcissism. His aristocratic birth, his good looking and his talent for writing colorful poetry made his reputation. His books sold very well and he was fairly established in his lifetime as a popular poet. His most famous books Don Juan and other works include Childe Harold Pilgrimage in which he described his travels in Spain, Portuguese, Albania and Greece. His notorious reputation as a womanizer finally destroyed his standing. He was reported to have an incest with his half-sister Augusta (his sister from his father’s first marriage). He had to live in debt when he went to Greece. He fought with Greece against Turky and died in Greece. This poem is a minor one but it is a very attractive love lyric. We study this poem mainly because Byron was very qualified by nature and temperament to write love poetry. This poem reflects his character. He describes a woman he loved and he was attracted to.

She Walks in Beauty Lord Byron

Lines 1-2: The poet compares the woman to a bright starlet cloudless night. From this comparison we can find how the woman looks like, i.e., the impressions or feelings we have about such a night help us to visualize the woman.

Q. What impressions do we get from such a night? How does such a night affect us?

It is a tranquil, restful, peaceful, imaginative, evocative and mysterious. From this comparison we have our first glimpse about the woman. We feel that the woman is dark. She is serene, mysterious and demure. So from the first two lines we notice how the poet succeeded in evoking our imaginative feelings so that we can depict the woman in our imagination.

Lines 3-4: The poet says that everything that is best about such a night , i.e., the best parts of its darkness and the best parts of its light “ star light” are reflected in the woman’s appearance, i.e., the beautiful darkness of the night is reflected in the darkness of the woman and the beautiful light of such a night “ star light” is reflected in the light of her eyes.

We notice here that the poet concentrates on describing the beauties of the night in order to depict the beauty of the woman because everyone can feel what a beautiful dark starlet night is like. So the reader can feel the beauties of such a night and by inference he can visualize the woman from the description of the night.

Lines 5-6: mellowed: matured

The poet is referring to the beauty of the woman as very tender and mellow beauty like the beauty of such a night.

Gaudy: showy without taste.

The poet compares the beauty of such a night to the tasteless beauty of the day and he says that heaven gives such a night a beauty which it denies to daylight with all its loud and tasteless colors.

From the first stanza we have a glimpse of the beauty of the woman. We can feel this beauty through the comparison with the starlet night and from this comparison we can visualize the appearance of the woman that she is dark, mysterious, evocative and demure. In this poem, the first half of it lines 1-10, we have the description of the appearance of the woman, in the second half of the poem we have a description of her personality.

Q. Why does the poet devote the first half of the poem to describe her appearance and the second half to describe her personality? Because beauty comprises both of outward appearance and personality.

The second stanza

Line 7: This poem is divided into two equal parts. The first part of the poem is from line 1-10 which describes the outward appearance of the woman. The second part Lines 10-18 describes her personality because beauty consists of both appearance and personality.

Lines 7-8: This woman’s balance between darkness and light in her appearance is so perfect that if we had more darkness (shade) and less light (ray) this will damage her beauty (grace) which is very unique that is nameless.

Lines 9-10 He refers to the balance of darkness and light. Her hair is very dark and her face is very radiant. Line 10 her thoughts are very sweetly expressed in her face.

Line 11: The home of her thoughts (her mid) is very pure and clear.

Lines 11-12: In these lines we have the first description of her personality and we find that her thought and mind are very pure and this is reflected in her face which radiates the beauty of her pure mind.

Lines 13-15: The purity of her thought is reflected in her smiles and these smiles radiate over her cheeks and they are very appealing. So far from her personality we find that her mind and thoughts are pure and they constitute the beauty of her personality. The last three lines explain the beauty of her personality.

Line 16: The purity of her mind and the beauty of her smiles show that the woman was brought up amidst goodness and plenty that she has lived a well-protected life and this has given her great deal of purity and innocence which make her personality attractive.

Line 17: Her mind is at complete peace with her body. There is no conflict or tention or frustration in either her mind or body. She is completely at peace with herself and this serenity gives her beauty of personality. The last line: her feelings of love are completely innocent, they are free from feminine slyness and it is this purity and innocence that make her personality attractive.

Revision

This is a romantic poem because the concept of love is part of the general romantic concept of sensuousness and depth of feeling. The poet begins by comparing the woman he loves, who is unknown to the reader, to an aspect of nature that is well-known to everyone, i.e., a very attractive , serene and starlet night. So the reader can conform an idea about this person through this association. The first stanza gives us a general description about the appearance of the woman. We find that she has very black hair and that she is dark and her face is radiant. The romantic element here lies in the sensitivity with which the poet presents the balanced perfection of light and darkness in her visage. The mixture of light and darkness is so perfect that any access of one over the other would spoil this perfection.

The second stanza gives further details of her appearance and it also touches upon her personality. The last two lines of the second stanza deal with her personality. The attractions of her personality lie in the purity anf the grace of her mind, her thoughts are very pure and contemplative. We find that there is no element of tension or frustration in her thoughts. It is this purity of thought that radiates from her face across her cheeks and brows, and this constitutes the demure and hence the attractive side of her personality. The romantic aspect of this description lies in the sensuous appeal which her pure and serene beauty has for the reader.

We can compare this poem with Coleridge’s poem Frost at Midnight, in that poem the clean, white and silent frost outside has a sensuous appeal for the poet and the reader. It soothes him and comforts him, so does the serene and pure beauty of personality and appearance of the woman soothes and comforts the poet and the reader. So this love poem is romantic because it soothes the feelings. The beauty of the woman is comforting. She is not a demanding person in her personality. She does not force the poet or the reader to react. She does not provoke his feelings and desires but elates and comforts them through her serenity and demureness.

We can also compare the romantic aspects of this poem with Wordsworth’s romanticism. Wordsworth was attracted to all that was pure, innocent and simple because these qualities through their freshness elated him and so in this poem, the woman’s personality, the innocence of her heart, the purity of her thoughts elated the poet, it comforted him and made him feel good inside , i.e., her beauty and personality did not provoke his desires but on the contrary, it elated and comforted his feelings.

There is a parallel between the beauty of the woman and the beauty of nature as seen by the romantics.

Q.: What are the comparisons that can be made between the romantic concept of nature and the romantic concept of the female beauty as seen in the poem?

First, nature has a certain perfection of its own and this perfection comprises of a delicate balance between all aspects of nature and so is the woman, she has a balanced perfection in the mixture of darkness and light in her visage.

Second, nature attracted the romantic poets because it comforted them. It replenished their drained emotional energies. They found it restful and refreshing. They found it recreative. Everyday is exactly the opposite of nature, it drains one’s energies. It is very demanding, it is exhausting.

In Wordsworth’s The World is too Much with us, the world is very exhausting and demanding. Nature is very restful and relaxing. It gives us rest and tranquility of mind while the world takes from us rest and tranquility. The woman is like nature, she is very restful to be with. She is pure in thought and heart, therefore, her company is very soothing to the poet and it is this comforting and soothing quality about the woman that constitutes the romantic aspects of the poem.