

Alfred Tennyson : Mariana

The form of the poem: The poem was written in stanzas of twelve lines each. Any work of art has two important elements: 1- the form, 2- the content. Here The form is discussed in answering to the how question. Content is discussed in answer to the question : What (the theme, etc...)The form of the poem : It was written in stanzas. It consists of seven stanzas, each of 12 lines and four lines refrain at the end of each stanza. The rhyme scheme is (a babcddecefef). The poem has a refrain: a group of lines that are used repeatedly by the poet. The refrains in this poem are not exactly the same, there are little changes in each line.

Lines 1-3 There is a run on line.

; = .

Flower-plots: areas in a garden planted with flowers.

The proof of the excellence of Tennyson is that we can imagine what he writes as if we see a film. The flower plots are covered with moss, the moss is dark and dry, an image of neglect and sadness. (neglect is the keyword of this poem). The poet gives us many pictures that intensify (strengthen) the sense of neglect (the images of negligence). This image is vivid and pervades the whole poem. The images presented by the poet could be of different sorts. This image goes to the eye (visual image), he is going to use all sorts of images.

Lines 3-4 The second image that intensify the negligence is the image of the nails which are rusted and begun to fall.

one and all : all of them.

crust: dry and hard

Gable-wall : the three cornered upper end of a wall where it meets the roof.

Stanza one:

moss : a substance that grows in stagnant water, the normal color of the moss is green but the poet describes them as being dark.

semicolon=full stop

The poet describes the plot of flowers which is covered with the dark moss because of neglect. In line 3,4 we have what we call a run-on-line, that is to say the idea is presented not only in one sentence but in the one that follows it. The nails are rusty so they started to fall.

plot : a piece of land

Lines 5-6

shed : حضائر

The sheds are broken. This site is very sad. The sheds are ruined now so they seem sad or perhaps if we look at them we feel sad. This is a continuation of the idea of neglect. The whole place is neglected. The poet succeeded in conveying this image of neglect through describing different things and how they reflect neglect. The poet employs personification when he describes the broken sheds as sad. In the previous five lines we have various images that appeal to the eye (visual images) like the broken sheds , the rusted nails, the flower-plot that is covered with the black moss. Through these images we see the effect of neglect on the place. Line 6: the latch is old that it is clinking.

Poetry can be defined as word painting. We read the words, build images in our minds and then we will understand it easily. In lines 1,2 the poet uses visual images, in lines 2,3 the poet employed visual images and he does the same in lines 5,6, in these lines we have auditory and visual images when he described the clinking latch.

Line 6 : The clinking latch was uplifted (unlocked), another image reflects neglect. The door is so old that it is uplifted.

Line 7 : The poet employed a visual image when he describes the unweeded and ruined thatch. There is no plant or weeds in the region, the place is lonely and deserted.

Line 8: moat: ditch

The first two lines are pure description of the place. the place is surrounding the house. The poet presents the setting in the first stanza. Every poem is a little drama in the sense that it gives a complete description of the setting. He also introduced the main character Mariana in the first stanza (in the last four lines). She is in despair, miserable, also he introduced a second character, i.e., her lover who did not come.

The second stanza:

Lines 1-2

dew : drops of water fall early in the morning.

She cried and her tears fell with the dews. She cried from the beginning of the evening till the dawn, she cried all night up till the morning.

Lines 3-4

She could not look at the sweet heaven either at morning or in the evening, i.e., she has no hope. She lost hope even to ask for God's mercy or to enjoy the beauty of life.

Lines 5-6

It becomes very dark, so the bat is mentioned because it is associated with darkness, she opened her window and looked at the dark plains. In stanza one, the poet describes the setting of the poem, the outside description, in stanza two, we have a glance at the heroine herself, we have more details than in the first stanza in which the poet introduced the characters. The first stanza is about the place whereas the second stanza is about the main character, Mariana.

In this poem the poet finishes the basic point of the drama (the setting), then, he will give us a complete analysis of the character of Mariana and her feelings in the following stanzas. She is hopeless, deserted and sad. There is an atmosphere of neglect, loneliness and sadness.

Stanza Three

The poet here is revealing Mariana's state of mind during the passage of time. He is adding more details, employing various images to give us the impression of her miserable state.

Lines 1-4

In these lines the poet employs auditory images which is dominant in this stanza. Because it was dark, one depends on other senses rather than the sense of sight. The owl is found in deserted places and among ruins, we get the impression that the place is neglected except for Mariana who heard the owl –crow. This description adds to the

atmosphere of loneliness, for the place is ruinous. It is a successful choice on the poet's part.

Stanza three

In this stanza we learn more about the central character, this stanza is mainly about Mariana.

Night fowl: owl

Here we have a description of Mariana. She was awakened in the middle of the night by the noise made by the owl. The cock started singing at dawn . In lines 3,4 , there is an employment of auditory images : the cock sung, the low of the oxen. Mariana slept by snatches. The poet chose the owl for certain purpose we find owls in ruins and deserted places and Mariana was in a deserted places so the image of the owl adds to the loneliness of the place.

Line 6 : She sleeps in snatches and even in that little snatch she seemed to walk, roam.

Line 7:

We have personification of the morning "grey-eyed". She received the morning with the same sadness and with the same wish to die. As spectators, we get more vivid impression about Mariana now, we are inside her room, the poet uses a kind of cinematic technique in order to convey his ideas.

Stanza four:

We have another general view of the house from inside:

sluice: dam which regulates the flow of water. Here the poet employs personification when he describes the image of a sluice which was covered with black water. By using this image, the poet intensifies the sense of neglect and desertion.

stone cast : على مرمى حجر

The marsh-mosses crept over the sluice.

Lines 5-6

poplar شجرة الحور (شجرة معمرة)

The poplar is shaking.

Bark: the thin layer that covers the tree \ gnarled: broken

The bark is soft and clear normally but when the tree became old it became or turned to be twisted and cricking.

Line 7: There was no other tree in the waste land around the house except the poplar tree. This in fact is the description of the place where the poet lived (Yorkshire)

In Mariana , the poplar tree was used symbolically. There was an association between the shaking of the tree and when she was shaking because both were lonely, the poplar was the only tree in the scene and Mariana was a lonely girl in that deserted area. Even nature (represented by the poplar tree) symbolizes Mariana's feelings of loneliness , i.e., the state of loneliness in Mariana is reflected in nature, the description of this image serves to emphasize the loneliness of

Mariana and to show us the sympathy and the relation between nature and Mariana (mutual sympathy).

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The central part of stanza four is the presentation of the poplar tree. There is an implied comparison between Mariana and the pop tree which is a way of showing the sympathy of man and nature.

Stanza 5

shrill : sharp sound

The wind was blowing strongly , it was windy, the curtain was moving because of the wind. Mariana saw the gusty shadow swaying in the white curtain from one place to another. The shadow of the tree falls upon her.

Lines 5,6

The poet builds a contrasting image.

bound: bind, tie, lock

The wind was bound within their cell as if the wind were imprisoned in a cell (metaphor).

The poet gave us two images of the same thing, when the moon is low , the shadows of the poplar tree fell on Mariana (when the wind calmed down). The poet employed personification when he describes the wind as a prisoner to indicate that it was calm. There is here a contrasting image of the same thing (the wind) when it was windy (gusty), the reflection of the tree was on the curtain, when the wind calmed down, the shadow was reflected on her bed and brow, the curtain was shaking.

The poet symbolizes or he employs the image of the shadow of the tree reflected on Mariana's bed as a symbol of the sympathy between man and nature. This reflection of the tree gave us the impression that there was a sympathy between the tree and Mariana to the extent that the tree seemed as if it visited her, i.e., it was a visitor which sympathized with Mariana, i.e., the relationship between man and nature.

Stanza six

In this stanza, the poet gives us a description of what was going on in her mind.

Lines 1-2

All the doors were creaking on their hinges. This is an example of the poet's successful employment of auditory images.

Lines 3-4

There was the buzzing of the blue fly in the pane. The shrieking of the mouse from behind the wainscot. The wainscot was so old that it became the nest of the mouse.

moldering: decaying

Here the poet succeeds in giving us a vivid description of Mariana's state of mind and the place she stayed in through a successful employment of visual-auditory images. Her imagination was disturbed she was extremely frightened, she started to see (lines 6-8) old faces and hear footsteps trod the upper floors, all this was part of her imagination. In the last decades of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century there was a new kind of novel appeared that was the gothic novels in which the setting is in old places. Tennyson here

through the employment of the above images tries to create a gothic atmosphere of horror because he was influenced by the gothic novels. Mariana in this stanza underwent another change. She realized that she was in pain, she realized her misery. There is here a kind of what we call self-realization (in the last stanza). Her wish was changed into a prayer to God to take away her life. This was the ultimate despair.

Stanza 7: In this stanza the poet goes on in describing Mariana's state of mind and her confusion which increases as she sinks deeper and deeper in despair. The woman is confused and disturbed by the sounds of the sparrow chirping on the roof, the clock ticking slowly, and the wind blowing through the poplar. Most of all, she hates the early evening hour when the sun begins to set and a sunbeam lies across her bed chamber. The woman recites an emphatic variation on the death-wish refrain; now it is not "the day," or even her "life" that is dreary; rather, we read: "Then said she, 'I am very dreary, / He will not come,' she said; / She wept, 'I am weary, weary, / Oh God, that I were dead!'" It is clear now that she is sure that he will not come.