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*Three
Centuries
of English
Poetry*

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АНАЛИТИЧЕСКОЕ ЧТЕНИЕ

(АНГЛИЙСКАЯ ПОЭЗИЯ XVIII—XX ВЕКОВ)

Пособие для студентов
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ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО «ПРОСВЕЩЕНИЕ»
ЛЕНИНГРАДСКОЕ ОТДЕЛЕНИЕ
ЛЕНИНГРАД • 1967

Настоящая книга продолжает серию пособий по аналитическому чтению для студентов старших курсов английских отделений и непосредственно примыкает к книге, посвященной английской прозе XVIII—XX вв. («Просвещение», Л., 1967). Оба пособия строятся по единому методическому принципу: ряд английских авторов — поэтов и прозаиков одновременно — представлен в обеих книгах, и наличие перекрестных ссылок предполагает параллельное использование этих двух пособий.

Так же как в книге, посвященной прозе, стилистическая система того или иного поэта рассматривается как выражение его духовного мира, сопоставляется с системами других поэтов и изучается как часть определенной литературной традиции. Но природа поэмы, принципиально отличная от природы прозы, требует внимания к специфическим особенностям стиля, прежде всего к вопросам версификации; к тому же характерная для поэзии высокая концептированность мысли и чувства заставляет с особенной тщательностью изучать образную структуру поэтических произведений.

Каждая из 23 глав пособия включает:

- 1) вводный историко-литературный очерк;
- 2) поэтический текст с подстрочными примечаниями, содержащими необходимые для его понимания исторические и литературные сведения, а также трудные слова и выражения (в основном из числа тех, что отсутствуют в англо-русском словаре); в главах, посвященных поэтам с большим стилистическим диапазоном, обычно анализируются два текста, представляющих разные стороны творческой манеры автора;
- 3) подробный стилистический комментарий;
- 4) один или два дополнительных текста для самостоятельного чтения и анализа (кроме тех случаев, когда основной текст настолько обширен, что дальнейшее увеличение объема главы представляется невозможным);
- 5) вопросы и задания к дополнительному тексту, а при отсутствии последнего — к основному тексту.

Как правило, вводные очерки в данной книге обширнее, чем в пособии по чтению прозы, так как за немногими исключениями (Верно, Байрон,

литературы уделяется мало
проков и живое представление
попадают и качество иллюстраций
дизайно, не становится предметом

примечаниями и стилистическими
приемы, поскольку представляют
иско-литературные, и нуждаются в до-

отся современная английская поэзия.
ем, требующих отдельного рассмотрения
м объеме книги. Поэтому раздел XX века
и войны.

отрицания предпочтение отдавалось таким,
терности не является временной принад-

Несколько составляют только те произведе-
ния, которые занимают первое место в творчестве данного ав-
тора и в европейской литературе. К их числу
относятся «Элегия на кладбище» Грея, «Поконченная деревня»
Гольдсмита, «Старый моряк» Кольриджа, «Ночной вечер» Скотта.

Всякий отбор, разумеется, предполагает известную субъективность, по-
во всех случаях составитель стремился дать образцы художественного
совершенства, наиболее полно раскрывающие творческий метод представ-
ленных в книге поэтов.

предисловие

The work of Pope, the most accomplished poet of the English classical tradition, belongs to the early stages of the Enlightenment. He thinks it his duty to assume the role of a lawgiver whose poetry has no other task but make men good and wise enough to enable them to alter things according to the dictates of reason and virtue.

Pope's standpoint invariably is that of a staunch upholder of both ethic and esthetic values. He is at his best as a satirist. He lashes out at moral and literary foibles alike. The brilliance and perfection of his verse along with the cutting sarcasm of his sallies against numerous adversaries in politics and poetry made Pope a formidable public figure and a great authority in matters of taste. His verse translation of Homer (1715—1726), his edition and criticism of Shakespeare (1725) completed his fame as an artist who already in an early poem (*Essay on Criticism*, 1711) had voiced the laws of good writing as they were conceived by the followers of the classical school. In the opinion of Pope the responsibility of the critic exceeds that of the writer:

'Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill
Appear in writing or in judging ill;
But, of the two, less dangerous is th' offence
To tire our patience, than mislead our sense.
Some few in that, but numbers err in this,
Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss;
A fool might once himself alone expose,
Now one in verse makes many more in prose...¹
Let such teach others who themselves excel,
And censure freely who have written well...
First follow Nature, and your judgment frame
By her just standard, which is still the same:
Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,

¹ Pope means that to each bad poet there are many bad critics.

One clear, unchang'd, and universal light,
 Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
 At once the source, and end, and test of Art...
 Those rules of old discover'd, not devised,
 Are nature still, but nature methodized;
 Nature, like liberty, is but restrain'd
 By the same laws which first herself ordain'd...

You, then, whose judgment the right course would steer,
 Know well each Ancient's proper character,
 His fable, subject, scope in every page;
 Religion, country, genius of his age:
 Without all these at once before your eyes,
 Cavil you may, but never criticize.
 Be Homer's works your study and delight;
 Read them by day, and meditate by night;
 Thence form your judgment, thence your maxima bring,
 And trace the Muses upward to their spring.
 Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem;
 To copy nature, is to copy them...

A little learning is a dangerous thing!
 Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian¹ spring:
 There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
 And drinking largely sobers us again...
 Some to conceit² alone their taste confine,
 And glittering thoughts strike out at every line;
 Pleased with a work where nothing's just or fit;
 One glaring chaos and wild heap of wit.
 Poets, like painters, thus unskill'd to trace
 The naked nature and the living grace,
 With gold and jewels cover every part,
 And hide with ornaments their want of art.
 True wit is nature to advantage dress'd,
 What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd...

(*Essay on Criticism*, Cantos I, II)

The rules were clear-cut, and Pope saw to it that they be rigorously observed. Observance of these rules did not only mean enforcing a standard of poetical excellence but also a standard of reason and common sense. These, in their turn, seemed a guarantee of the rational improvement of things that Pope was anxious for, along with other leading spirits of the Age of Enlightenment.

Pope was confident that his was the time of universal reform, of unprecedented growth of all manner of knowledge. Men of letters and scientists, he believed, had saved the world from the darkness of ignorance:

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night.
 God said: Let Newton be, and there was light.

Newton, it would appear, had paved the way for the age of learning and universal perfectibility.

¹ Pierian -- belonging to Pieria -- a district in North Thessaly (a region in Greece) which was supposed to be the Home of the Muses

² conceit -- here: wit

Pope's optimistic philosophy is fully expounded in his *Essay on Man* (1733), while his disgust with the politics, morals and poetry of his times is best illustrated by his epistles and satires and by his poem *The Dunciad* (1728). The poet's ironical hits at the futility of fashionable life are probably nowhere so light and sparkling as in the mock-heroic poem *The Rape of the Lock* (1711). It was written on a deliberately trivial subject to travesty the grand style.

The *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, often miscalled *Prologue to the Satires*, is in a more serious vein. The addressee was physician to Queen Anne and the author of satirical and political works. The *Epistle* is remarkable as an elucidation of Pope's views on literature and society. The poet speaks of himself as a martyr to the cause of virtue, sorely beset by friends and foes. He refers to his poem as a just vindication "from slanders of all sorts and slanderers of what rank or quality soever"; he also states his motives for writing at all. On another occasion Pope sent a prose reply to Dr. Arbuthnot's friendly exhortation not to be so personally offensive in his satires. He said: "General Satire in Times of General Vice has no force and is no Punishment. People have ceas'd to be ashamed of it when so many are join'd with them; and 'tis only by hunting One or two from the Herd that any Examples can be made. If a man writ all his Life against the Collective Body of the Bauditti, or against Lawyers, would it do the least Good, or lessen the Body? But if some are hung up, or pillory'd, it may prevent others."

EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT

(1735)

- 1 A man's true merit 'tis not hard to find;
But each man's secret standard in his mind,
That casting-weight¹ pride adds to emptiness,
This, who can gratify? for who can guess?
- 5 The bard whom pilfer'd pastorals renown,²
Who turns a Persian tale for half a crown,
Just writes to make his barrenness appear,
And strains, from hard-bound brains, eight lines a year;
He, who still wanting, though he lives on theft,
- 10 Steals much, spends little, yet has nothing left:
And he, who now to sense, now nonsense leaning,
Means not, but blunders round about a meaning;
And he, whose fustian's so sublimely bad,
It is not poetry, but prose run mad:

¹ casting-weight — here: the weight that makes the balance turn when exactly poised

² Pope means a minor poet Philipps who had translated ("turned") a book called *Persian Tales*.

- 15 All these, my modest satire bade translate,¹
And own'd that nine such poets made a Tate.²
How did they fume, and stamp, and roar, and chafe!
And swear, not Addison himself was safe.

Peace to all such! But were there one whose fires

- 20 True genius kindles, and fair fame inspires;
Blest with each talent and each art to please,
And born to write, converse, and live with ease:
Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,³
25 View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
And hate for arts that caused himself to rise;
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
30 Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;
Alike reserved to blame, or to commend,
A timorous foe, and a suspicious friend:
Dreading e'en fools, by flatterers besieged,
And so obliging, that he ne'er obliged;
35 Like Cato,⁴ give his little senate laws,
And sit attentive to his own applause;
While wits and Templars⁵ every sentence raise,
And wonder with a foolish face of praise: —
Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?
40 Who would not weep, if Atticus⁶ were he?
What though my name stood rubric⁷ on the walls,
Or plastered posts, with claps, in capitals?
Or smoking forth, a hundred hawkers'⁸ load,
On wings of winds came flying all abroad?
45 I sought no homage from the race that write;
I kept, like Asian monarchs, from their sight:

¹ translate — here: to interpret.

² Tate — the Poet Laureate in Pope's time; note the allusion to the popular proverb: "Nine tailors make a man."

³ An ironical allusion to the old Turkish custom according to which, on the new Sultan's accession to the throne, all his brothers were put to death, so as to avoid a struggle for power.

⁴ Cato (87—48 B. C.) — Roman statesman, hero of Addison's tragedy *Cato* (1714).

⁵ Templars — privileged lawyers, members of the Inner and Middle Temple, English Inns of Court, or officially recognized legal societies.

⁶ Atticus — Pope's name for Addison. Pope's wrath was excited by his suspicion that Addison had inspired two minor poets, Gildon and Dennis, to write a pamphlet attacking Pope (*The True Character of Mr. Pope*, 1716). Pope's satire is generally recognized as an unfair and prejudiced piece of characterization.

⁷ rubric — red letters used on title pages of books and on claps (posters pasted on posts)

⁸ hawkers — peddlars who call out their wares

- Poems I heeded (now he-rhymed so long)
 No more than thou, great George! ¹ a birth-day song.
 I ne'er with wits or wittings pass'd my days,
 30 To spread about the itch of verse and praise;
 Nor like a puppy, daggled ² through the town,
 To fetch and carry sing-song up and down;
 Nor at rehearsals sweat, ³ and mouthed, and cried,
 With handkerchief and orange at my side;
 50 But sick of fops, and poetry, and prate,
 To Bufo ⁴ left the whole Castalian ⁵ state.

- Proud as Apollo on his forked hill,
 Sat full-blown Bufo, puff'd by every quill;
 Fed with soft dedication all day long,
 60 Horace ⁶ and he went hand in hand in song.
 His library (where busts of poets dead
 And a true Pindar ⁷ stood without a head)
 Received of wits an undistinguished race,
 Who first his judgment asked, and then a place;
 65 Much they extoll'd his pictures, much his eat,
 And flatter'd every day, and some days eat: ⁸
 Till grown more frugal in his riper days,
 He paid some bards with port, and some with praise;
 To some a dry rehearsal was assign'd,
 70 And others (harder still) he paid in kind.
 Dryden ⁹ alone (what wonder?) came not nigh,
 Dryden alone escaped this judging eye:
 But still the great have kindness in reserve,
 He help'd to bury whom he help'd to starve.
 75 May some choice patron bless each grey goose quill!
 May every Bavius ¹⁰ have his Bufo still!
 So, when a statesman wants a day's defence,

¹ great George — George II (1727–1760)

² dagle — to wet or grow wet by dragging on the wet ground

³ sweat = sweated

⁴ Bufo — a combined portrait of Bubb Dodington, Lord Melcome and the Earl of Halifax who were often lauded as patrons of arts and letters by poets of inferior merits and superior appetites. In 18th century England writers were so ill-paid that if they had no other income they were under the necessity of seeking the protection of rich and noble patrons whom, in return, they flattered in their works.

⁵ Castalian — from Castalia, a fountain on Parnassus; used as a periphrase for "literary" and "poetic"

⁶ Horace (65–8 B. C.) — Roman poet

⁷ Pindar (520–440 B. C.) — Greek poet

⁸ eat = ate

⁹ John Dryden (1631–1700) — English poet, who according to Pope had been neglected in his life-time but given a grand funeral by the Earl of Halifax

¹⁰ Bavius — Roman poet, referred to by Virgil as worthless

- Or envy holds a whole week's war with sense,
 Or simple pride for flattery makes demands,
 90 May dance by dance be whistled off my hands!
 Blest be the great! for those they take away,
 And those they left me; for they left me Gay;¹
 Left me to see neglected genius bloom,
 Neglected die, and tell it on his tomb:
 100 Of all thy blameless life the sole return
 My verse, and Queensberry weeping o'er thy urn!
 Oh, let me live my own, and die so too!
 (To live and die is all I have to do!)
 Maintain a poet's dignity and ease,
 110 And see what friends, and read what books I please:
 Above a patron, though I condescend
 Sometimes to call a Minister my friend.
 I was not born for courts or great affairs;
 I pay my debts, believe, and say my pray'rs;
 120 Can sleep without a poem in my head;
 Nor know, if Dennis² be alive or dead.

COMMENTS

The above extract, as well as the whole of the Epistle, falls into several parts, some of them written at different times but skilfully arranged to form a striking whole. In the first part (lines 1—18) Pope heaps contempt on wretched poetasters whose petty rancour he had roused by his stinging criticism. In the second (lines 19—40) he draws a justly famous and much-quoted portrait of Addison, his one-time friend and rival; in the third (lines 41—56) Pope asserts himself as one who stands above corruption and flattery, too proud to fawn upon the great in exchange for their patronage; the fourth contains another specimen of brilliant caricature in verse, an assault on "Bubo", the patron of arts (lines 57—76), and ends with an apology of the poet's own daring and independence (lines 77—96). As a poet of the Age of Enlightenment Pope devoted his writings to a didactic purpose: to destroy whatever made life absurd and worthless. Pope meant to set up a standard of perfect rationalism, moral and artistic alike, and to laugh to scorn those who departed from these standards. Pope's classicism served both as a model and a weapon.

One of the major peculiarities of Pope's style is the classical balance, precision and elegance with which his savage blows are dispensed. However deadly the satire, the wording must follow the rules laid down by Pope, — the rules of clarity, brevity and euphony,

¹ John Gay (1693—1732) — English poet and dramatist. Pope believed he was not given his due by anybody but himself, and the Duke of Queensberry.

² John Dennis (1657—1734) — a minor dramatist and critic

deduced from the study of ancient authors (cf. p. 6). The most ruthless characteristics dealt out by the poet are exquisite in their classical sense of proportion and dignity. Of these the lines on Addison afford a convincing example. In the approved style of classical allusion he is referred to as "Atticus". The allusion is ironical, as the Atticus of Roman history (Titus Pomponius Atticus, 1st century B. C.) was celebrated for gentle manners, impartiality and generosity.

Pope's most favoured device is that of antithesis. It is manipulated very skilfully, on several levels. Firstly, there is the contrast between the tribe of poor rhymesters and the author himself, as well as that between the latter and "Atticus". Secondly, within the characteristic of "Atticus" there is a strong antithesis between the first lines, highly complimentary to "Atticus", and the subsequent, violently disparaging reflections. The antithesis is next brought into play within many of the rhymed couplets and lastly within many singly taken lines ("View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes", "Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike", "A timorous foe, and a suspicious friend", etc.).

It will be seen that the antithetical elements are always nicely balanced rhythmically, the number of stressed iambic syllables being evenly distributed between the two contrasted notions. As a rule there are either two feet in the first half-line and three in the second, or vice versa, with a clearly defined caesura after the second (or third) foot, for example:

Alike reserved to blame, or to commend,
A timorous foe, and a suspicious friend.

0 1 / 0 1 / 0 1 || 0 0 / 0 —
0 1 / 0 1 || 0 0 / 0 1 / 0 1

Pope's use of the heroic couplet, i. e. ten-syllable iambic lines rhyming in pairs, is perfectly adapted to the classical restraint of his style, each idea being stated concisely and more often than not confined within the limits of the couplet:

Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?
Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?

The couplet quoted above winds up the anti-Addisonian tirade — a period presenting a gradual accumulation of statements, grammatically more or less identical, and reaching an impressive climax.

The resulting effect, in the present case, is a characteristic where every word tells and adds to the notion of a man who is cruel enough to be dangerous, but lacks the courage necessary for fair fight. The essence of Addison's nature, as Pope unjustly conceives it, is to

Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering teach the rest to sneer.

The oxymoron ("damn with faint praise") and the antithesis of the second line put the finishing touches to Pope's conception of gentle-mannered and false friendship.

Pope's classical tastes reveal themselves in his fierce contempt of the whole race of ignorant scribblers who fall short of true learning and polish. These are belittled in words that are offensive in their low colloquial implications and particularly so when occurring in close proximity with words of the highest poetic range. Thus, Pope introduces

The Bard whom pilfer'd pastorals renown,
Who turns a Persian tale for half a crown.

The high-flown *bard*, a word of ancient Gaelic descent, in conjunction with the low *pilfer*, denoting a petty theft, and the exotic Persian tales that have such a low price are a clear proof of Pope's nice sense of verbal values. Following his own precept that "the sound must seem an echo to the sense", Pope changes the rhythm of these contemptuous lines from the stately to the less dignified and regular rhythm of lines like:

He, who still wanting, though he lives on theft,
Steals much, spends little, yet has nothing left.

The second of these lines is broken up into three parts, differently from the more usual division into two parts. Likewise the line "How did they fume, and stamp, and roar, and chafe!" has four parts and a comical array of undignified colloquial verbs. These alternations save Pope's verse from the dreary monotony of the heroic couplet.

Another instance of brilliantly brief summation is Pope's portrait of Bufo, a composite indictment of a powerful patron of the arts and poetry, a man who lives and thrives on flattery and does not care for the source, so long as he has the thing he craves for. The classical polish of the poet is evident from the nature of the few but highly characteristic illustrations Pope introduced to elaborate his point: Bufo, the patron, is "full-blown", because he is "puffed by every quill"; his library is well stocked with busts of poets, some of them headless — a thrust at the antiquaries who give headless marble torsos the names of famous ancient poets.

From literary matters, thus briefly summed up, Pope most naturally passes on to matters of state, for they are ruled by the same venality and stupidity that govern the world of letters. The logical connection between these two worlds is clearly expressed by the conjunction so ("So, when a statesman wants a day's defence..."). From these general considerations there is again a perfectly logical return to individual circumstance: in their lust for flattery men of state call for the service of dunces and neglect true genius.

This introduces an apology of Gay whose integrity the poet himself hopes to imitate. At the height of his proud declaration of independence (climax) comes a comical anticlimax: I, says Pope,

Can sleep without a poem in my head,
Nor know, if Dennis be alive or dead

Anticlimax is only one of the many devices used by Pope for satirical purpose. He also makes frequent recourse to irony and exaggerated praise, such as the apostrophe to "Great George" — a king Pope despised for the mediocrity of his understanding and statesmanship; or his commendation of the kindness of the great who help to bury a poet whom they "helped to starve" (another instance of Pope's use of antithesis); or his feigned gratitude to the great for drawing to themselves all the dunces and leaving behind the few choice spirits. Of satirical value is also a conscious incongruity in the use of things incompatible as homogeneous members ("And flatter'd every day, and some days eat"; "He paid some bards with port, and some with praise"). Satirical purposes are further well served by plays on words, like "wits or wittings", or "now to sense, now nonsense leaning".

Pope's concern with "nonsense", with "dunces", with "fools" is highly significant. He thought it his mission to enlighten the public and the age; he found it necessary to adhere to the laws of Reason, to do away with all verbal superfluity, with the whimsical and irregular, and to adhere to the rational, the general, the lucid. Thence the well-chosen, well-generalized epithets: *modest* (attire), *jealous* (eyes), *faint* (praise), *civil* (leer), *undistinguished* (race), *soft* (dedication), *choice* (patron), and sometimes the pretty well-worn *true genius*, *fair fame*, *blameless life*; thence, too, the classical similes: "like Cato" (the latter being also a broad hint at Addison's tragedy *Cato*, and, consequently, at the author, lest some simple-minded reader should fail to recognize him in Atticus), "like Apollo". Thence, finally, metonymies, like "May some choice patron bless each gray goose quill!" and the aphoristic lines that lend themselves so well to quotation (e.g.: "It is not poetry, but prose run mad", "A man's true merit 'tis not hard to find").

The following is an excerpt from the same epistle and is Pope's portrait of Lord Hervey, a courtier and a favourite of the Queen. He had been a friend of the poet's but then wrote a pamphlet against him. Pope calls him Sporus alluding to the historical Sporus, a eunuch and courtier of the Roman emperor Nero (1st century).

Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,
This painted child of dirt, that stinks and stings;
Whose buzz the witty and the fair annoys,
Yet wit ne'er tastes, and beauty ne'er enjoys:

So well-bred spaniels civilly delight
 In mumbling of the game they dare not bite.
 Eternal smiles his emptiness betray,
 As shallow streams run dimpling all the way.
 Whether in florid impotence he speaks,
 And as the prompter breathes, the puppet squeaks;
 Or at the ear of Eve,¹ familiar toad,
 Half froth, half venom, spits himself abroad,
 In puns, or politics, or tales, or lies,
 Or spite, or smut, or rhymes, or blasphemies.
 His wit all *see-saw*,² between that and this,
 Now high, now low, now master up, now miss,
 And he himself one vile antithesis.
 Amphibious thing! that acting either part,
 The trifling head, or the corrupted heart,
 Fop at the toilet, flatterer at the board,
 Now trips a lady, and now struts a lord.
 Eve's tempter thus the Rabbins have express'd,
 A cherub's face, a reptile all the rest;³
 Beauty that shocks you, parts⁴ that none will trust,
 Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust.
 Not fortune's worshipper, nor fashion's fool,
 Not lucre's⁵ madman, nor ambition's tool,
 Not proud, nor servile; — he one poet's praise,
 That, if he pleased, he pleased by many ways:
 That flattery, e'en to kings, he held a shame,
 And thought a lie in verse or prose the same;
 That not in fancy's maze he wandered long,
 But stoop'd to truth, and moralized his song:
 That not for fame, but virtue's better end,
 He 'stood'⁷ the furious foe, the timid friend,
 The damning critic, half-approving wit,
 The coxcomb hit, or fearing to be hit;
 Laugh'd at the loss of friends he never had,
 The dull, the proud, the wicked, and the mad;
 The distant threats of vengeance on his head,

¹ An allusion to Queen Caroline, wife of George II. who, like the Eve of the biblical myth, was sensitive to flattery.

² his wit all *see-saw* — his witticisms have the dull regularity of a saw's motions

³ now trips a lady, and now struts a lord — now trips like a lady, now struts like a lord

⁴ Pope implies that his enemy is like the tempter of Eve, Satan, whom learned Rabbins (the alleged authors and commentators of the Bible) represent as a snake with an angelic face.

⁵ parts — abilities, capacities (arch.)

⁶ lucre — *here*: money

⁷ he 'stood' — he withstood

The blow unfelt,¹ the tear he never shed;
 The tale revived, the lie so oft o'erthrown,
 The imputed trash, and dullness not his own;
 The morals blacken'd when the writings 'scape,²
 The libel'd person, and the pictured shape;
 Abuse, on all he loved, or loved him, spread,
 A friend in exile, or a father dead;
 The whisper, that to greatness still too near,
 Perhaps yet vibrates on his sov'reign's ear: —
 Welcome for thee, fair virtue! all the past:
 For thee, fair virtue! welcome e'en the last!

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. Summarize Pope's picture of Sporus.
2. Which of his characteristics arouse the poet's special aversion? Give the reason why. Explain the poet's moral purpose.
3. Comment on the use of antithesis as the central device of Pope's satire. Give examples from the text.
4. Discuss Pope's portrait of himself as a poet of integrity and civil virtue.
5. Quote complete sentences possessing a complete meaning. Which of them are the more memorable ones?
6. Pick out the similes introduced by Pope.
7. Comment on such "low" similes as that of the "well-bred spaniels". Find one of the same type in the first part of the text.
8. Point out the personal allusions.
9. Cite examples of metonymies and explain their function.
10. Would you call periphrase typical of Pope and the classical style? Point out examples from the text.
11. Characterize Pope's vocabulary, its abstract nature, the predominance of nouns over verbs, of Romanic over Germanic words; give examples of adjectives used as nouns. Draw lists of nouns you consider of special importance in the character of Sporus.
12. Why does Pope call Sporus a "vile antithesis" and an "amphibious thing"? What other similes and appellations referring to him do you think expressive and why?
13. Give examples of Pope's use of period and gradation.

¹ The blow unfelt. — Pope means the rumour that he was publicly whipped for his sharp pen.

² 'scape = e-scape

Samuel Johnson

(Born 1709) — (Died 1784)

Doctor Johnson belongs to England's most popular 18th century writers. If he is far less known in other European countries, it is because his national prejudices were strong, his political and moral code narrow and his attitude towards the advanced thought of the time inconsistent and too obviously stamped with the compromising tendencies of 18th century British thought.

And yet his claim to attention and remembrance is by no means negligible. In the words of a modern scholar, "poet, critic, essayist, journalist, editor and great literary personality, Johnson was one of the first full-dress professional men of letters in England". His unique art as a conversationalist is preserved in the famous *Life of Samuel Johnson* written by James Boswell (1791). As a critic, he is renowned for his *Lives of the Poets* and for innumerable pieces of criticism wherein Johnson lays down the laws of good writing, and also for his edition of *Shakespeare* (1765), one of the first where no pains were spared to ascertain the real text of the dramatist's plays and give them an admiring though critical appreciation. In Johnson's essays published in the immensely popular magazines *The Rambler* and *The Idler* he touches upon every variety of subject, following the rule he had borrowed from Horace, "to instruct by pleasing".

In his own time it was his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) that gained a major reputation for him. For present purposes it is enough to say that the Dictionary reveals that deep interest in words and diction which made Johnson such an authority on literary taste. He is a purist, a man whose artistic ideas have been shaped by reading and translating Latin poetry and prose. This places him among the classicists, who believed in the existence of absolute irrefutable canons established by sense, reason, and moral feeling. Of these canons Johnson was a zealous adherent, in the

spirit of the enlightened age of which he was a part. His classical doctrine is embodied in the tragedy of *Irene* (1749), and in his satires.

As a moralist Johnson enjoyed universal recognition. He took rather a pessimistic view of human nature and society. In this he differed from such leading figures of the Enlightenment as, for instance, Fielding. But his severe exposure of the vices of his time treated in the light of superior knowledge and ethics bring him close to the rationalist outlook of the period. His criticism is conveyed, for instance, in the rhetorical questions and the aphoristic utterances of the well-known passage from his satire *London* (1739):

Has Heaven reserv'd, in Pity to the Poor,
No pathless Waste, or undiscover'd Shore?
No secret Island in the boundless Main?
No peaceful Desert yet unclaim'd by Spain?
Quick let us rise, the happy Seats explore,
And bear Oppression's Insolence no more.
This mournful Truth is ev'rywhere confess'd,
Slow rises Worth, by Poverty depress'd;
But here more slow, where all are Slaves to Gold,
Where Looks are Merchandise, and Smiles are sold,
Where won by Bribes, by Flatteries implor'd,
The Groom retails the Favours of his Lord.

LONDON

In Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal¹

(1738)

At length awaking, with contemptuous Frown,
Indignant Thales² eyes the neighb'ring Town.

Since Worth, he cries, in these degenerate Days,
Wants³ ev'n the cheap Reward of empty Praise;
In those curs'd Walls, devote⁴ to Vice and Gain,
Since unrewarded Science toils in vain,
Since Hope but soothes to double my Distress,
And ev'ry Moment leaves my Little less;⁵
While yet my steady steps no staff sustains,
And Life still vigorous revels in my Veins;
Grant me, kind Heav'n, to find some happier Place,

¹ An allusion to Spain's aspirations to power in far-off lands.

² Juvenal (42—125) — Roman poet famous for his satires.

³ Thales — Greek philosopher; here a general designation of a philosopher, any philosopher.

⁴ wants — here: lacks.

⁵ devote — devoted, type of abbreviation frequent in 18th century poetry.

⁶ leaves my little less — the little I have becomes less (a typical "point").

Where Honesty and Sense are no Disgrace;
 Some pleasing Bank where verdant Osiers¹ play,
 Some peaceful Vale with Nature's Paintings gay;
 Where once the harass'd Briton found Repose,
 And safe in Poverty defy'd his Foes;
 Some secret Cell, ye Pow'rs, indulgent give,
 Let — — live here,² for — — has learn'd to live.
 Here let those reign, whom Pensions can incite
 To vote a Patriot Black, a Courtier White;
 Explain their Country's dear-bought Rights away,³
 And plead for Pirates⁴ in the Face of Day;
 With slavish Tenets taint our poison'd Youth,
 And lend a Lie the Confidence of Truth.

Let such raise Palaces, and Manors buy,
 Collect a Tax, or farm a Lottery;⁵
 With warbling Eunuchs⁶ fill our licens'd Stage,
 And lull to Servitude a thoughtless Age.

Heroes, proceed! What Bounds your Pride shall hold?
 What check restrain your Thirst of Pow'r and Gold?
 Behold rebellious Virtue quite o'erthrown,
 Behold our Fame, our Wealth, our Lives, your own.

To such the Plunder of a Land is giv'n,
 When Public Crimes inflame the Wrath of Heav'n:
 But what, my Friend, what Hope remains for me,
 Who start at Theft, and blush at Perjury?
 Who scarce forbear, tho' Britain's Court he sing,
 To pluck a titled Poet's borrow'd Wing;⁷
 A Statesman's Logic unconvinc'd can hear,
 And dare to slumber o'er the Gazetteer;⁸
 Despise a Fool in half his Pension dress'd,⁹
 And strive in vain to laugh at Hervey's¹⁰ Jest.

¹ osiers — young willows, twigs of the willow-tree

² Let — live here. — The dashes stand for the name of some successful privileged man of London whom Johnson does not wish to mention.

³ explain their Country's... rights away — the poet means that in their pretation the rights of people seem to be no rights at all

⁴ plead for Pirates — the invasions of the Spaniards were defended in the Houses of Parliament

⁵ farm a lottery — receive permission to arrange a lottery on condition of payment of a certain fixed sum to the State, the rest of the profit going to the lottery-farmer

⁶ In 18th century Italy, especially in the Papal State, boy singers for the church choirs (later also for theatres) were castrated in order to preserve soprano or alto voices.

⁷ Who scarce forbear... — who cannot help pointing out the Plagiarisms of a noble born poet, even if that poet praises the Court in his poems the Gazetteer — the paper which at that time contained apologies for the Court

⁸ in half his pension dress'd — whose clothes cost half a pension

⁹ Hervey — see p. 13

Others with softer Smiles, and subtler Art,
 Can sap the Principles, or taint the Heart;
 With more Address a Lover's Note convey,
 Or bribe a Virgin's Innocence away.
 Well may they rise, while I, whose Rustic Tongue
 Ne'er knew to puzzle Right, or varnish Wrong,
 Spurn'd as a Beggar, dreaded as a Spy,
 Live unregarded, unlamented die.

COMMENTS

The satire is a sweeping denunciation of England's capital as a place of sordid greed and corruption. Here Johnson follows the lead of Pope who is known to have favourably noticed the younger man's work. According to Johnson, London is a place of vain glory, of sinful idleness and of crime. The poor and the oppressed are driven to desperation by the persecution of the rich, and the only hope rests with the endeavour of the satirist to lay bare the glaring injustice of the age and "in Virtue's cause once more exert his rage".

Like Pope, Johnson sets up to be a moralist who inculcates his lesson by means of incisive satire and furious invective. These are also achieved by powerful use of irony and antithesis, as, for example, in the following lines:

Here let those reign, whom Pensions can incline
 To vote a Patriot Black, a Courtier White...

Or else:

And lend a Lie the Confidence of Truth.

Or else:

Ne'er knew to puzzle Right or varnish Wrong...

Antithetical structure is all the more impressive for the use of studied rhythmical balance. The lines are arranged in parallel or balanced patterns. Thus in the closing couplet of the excerpt:

Spurn'd as a Beggar, I dreaded as a Spy,
 Live unregarded, I unlamented die.

The half-lines are almost identical grammatically and rhythmically, being separated by a pause (caesura) into perfectly equal groups, each of five syllables. The inversion of the order of participle and infinitive in the last line ("unlamented die") only emphasizes the regularity of the general pattern and gives it a climactic finality.

Abundance of personification ("Since Hope but soothes to double

my Distress"), of metonymy ("Since unrewarded Science toils in vain"), of periphrase ("Life still vigorous revels in my Veins", "With slavish Tenets taint our poison'd Youth") aims at intensifying the contrast between things as they are and things as they should be, between the prostitution of statesmen and court-poets and the author's righteousness, between the vices of the town and the peacefulness of nature. In all these matters Johnson follows the precepts of the Roman satirist Juvenal. His immediate predecessor is Pope: with both poets contrasts in diction set off by parallels in rhetorical patterns are subordinate to contrasts of wide moral issues.

But Johnson is first and foremost a moralist and only secondly an artist, whereas with Pope moral and artistic concerns are one. Of the two Johnson is more direct, more blunt, more vigorous. Pope seems to wield a more delicate, if no less deadly weapon. Johnson is less elegant, less fastidious in his choice of words and imagery, his irony is heavier and his "points" never so carefully elaborated. There are fewer classical allusions in *London* than in Pope's Epistle, and altogether the exquisite classical refinement and balance of Pope's verse is never reached by Johnson. His diction is even more abstract than that of Pope, consisting almost entirely of abstract nouns and equally abstract adjectives; the verbs are also very few. The abstract nouns are: *Worth*, *Reward*, *Praise*, *Vice*, *Guin*, *Science*, *Hope*, *Distress*, *Life*, *Heaven*, etc. Some of them are metonymically substituted for common nouns, as, for example, *Science* for scholars or scientists, *Worth* for men of worth, etc. Of the common nouns a great number are more or less abstract in meaning: *Walls* is a metonymy for town; *Place* is not a concretely visualized place, but any ideal, Utopian spot of the Earth. So are *Bank* and *Vale*, *Palaces* and *Manors*, all of them standing for general, non-individualized conceptions. They are looked upon as personifications and have initial capitals.

The adjectives are also abstract in pointing out features that are common to all phenomena of a similar nature: *pleasing* (Bank), *verdant* (Osiers), *peaceful* (Vale), *softer* (Smiles), *subtler* (Art), *Rustic* (Tongue), etc. Very few of these adjectives are more individual. So are *slavish* (Tenets), *poison'd* (Youth), *harass'd* (Briton), but even these arouse only general notions, probably in deference to Johnson's firm belief that abstractions are essential to poetic dignity. In accordance with the classicist doctrine of art he held that "great thoughts are always general". This idea accounts for the most effective peculiarity of Johnson's style — his shrewd selection of poetic facts that are forceful in their typicality, thoroughly purged from anything belonging to the world of chance. Johnson sacrifices lively individual touches and takes hold of those things only that are or might be true of a great modern city in "degen'rate Days", when self-interest and pension-hunting take the

place of public feeling. Thence the array of heavy thrusts at all those who can "explain their Country's dear-bought Rights away...", and at her expense

...raise Palaces, and Manors buy,
Collect a Tax, or farm a Lottery, etc.

All these statements, general in expression and in meaning, alternate, each playing its own part in the cumulative formulation of a finely generalized picture of depravity and injustice. The total is the result of a number of periods, generally arranged with a view to gradation and climax. The extract under examination consists of five such periods, the first being by far the longest. It is a complex sentence, beginning with two subordinate clauses of cause (six lines, from "Since worth..." to "...my Little less"), of time (two lines, from "while yet..." to "...in my Veins"), giving then the main clause, in the conventional form of an apostrophe to Heaven ("Grant me, kind Heav'n, to find some happier Place"), and leading to a new subordinate clause to define the "happier place" and ending in the effective oxymoron "safe in Poverty".

The other periods are shorter and, like the first, fall into regular couplets, each making more or less complete sense within the pattern of the period as a whole:

Let such raise Palaces, and Manors buy,
Collect a Tax, or farm a Lottery;
With warbling Eunuchs fill our silenc'd Stage,
And lull to Servitude a thoughtless Age.

The first two lines form a logical and grammatical entity, after the fashion of the heroic couplet; the second two lines, though grammatically incomplete, are perfectly comprehensible even without the previous ones, and carry a double antithesis, both within the single line ("With warbling Eunuchs fill our silenc'd Stage") and within the two lines of the couplet:

With warbling Eunuchs fill...
And lull to servitude...

The stately periods, with their full use of the metrical possibilities of the couplet, with their grand and often polysyllabic diction, make for that dignified and formal style that has so firmly associated the later stages of English classicism with the name of Johnson. It is a well worn and often quoted opinion that if the Doctor introduced small fishes in a poem of his and made them talk they would all speak like whales. If that kind of grandeur does not always appeal to 20th century readers they can hardly help being impressed by the powerful generality that Johnson lends to his thoughts, by his reliance on his readers' intellect and understanding, by his plea for justice and integrity.

THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES

In Imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal

(1749)

Let Observation, with extensive View,
Survey Mankind from China to Peru;
Remark each anxious Toil, each eager Strife,
And watch the busy Scenes of crowded Life;
Then say how Hope and Fear, Desire and Hate,
O'erspread with Snares the clouded Haze of Fate,
Where wav'ring Man, betray'd by vent'rous Pride,
To tread the dreary Paths without a Guide,
As treach'rous Phantoms in the Mist delude,
Shuns fancied Ills, or chases airy Good;¹
How rarely Reason guides the stubborn Choice,
Rules the bold Hand, or prompts the suppliant Voice;
How Nations sink, by darling Schemes² oppress'd,
When Vengeance listens to the Fool's Request.
Fate wings with ev'ry wish th' afflictive Dart,
Each Gift of Nature, and each Grace of Art;
With fatal Heat impetuous Courage glows,
With fatal Sweetness Elocution flows,
Impeachment stops the Speaker's pow'ful Breath,
And restless Fire precipitates on Death.
But, scarce observ'd, the knowing and the Bold
Fall in the gen'ral Massacre of Gold;
Wide-wasting Pest! that rages unconfin'd,
And crowds with Crimes the Records of Mankind;
For Gold his sword the Hireling Ruffian draws,
For Gold the hireling Judge distorts the Laws;
Wealth heap'd on Wealth, nor Truth, nor Safety buys,
The Dangers gather as the Treasures rise

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. Give the substance of the above passage in your own words.
2. What are Johnson's principal accusations against his time? What outlook is revealed in them?
3. Explain the meaning of the five lines from "Fate wings with ev'ry wish..." to "...precipitates on Death".
4. Comment upon Johnson's diatribe against the power of Gold.
5. Divide the text into periods and analyse their structure.

¹ Man... chases airy Good — man tries in vain to find the Good that eludes him

² darling schemes — here: favourite plans (of statesmen)

6. What is the function of the opening lines? How do they introduce the subject of the satire?

7. Point out the principal devices of Johnson's satire.

8. What devices are used in the line "Shuns fancied Ills, or chases airy Good"?

9. Give instances of apostrophe. What is its stylistic function?

10. Draw up a list of words of Romanic origin. Are they numerous?

11. Give simpler synonyms for the abstract nouns occurring in the text.

12. Cite the more striking couplets of the text under examination.

13. Compare the satirical portraits in Pope's poem and in Johnson's.

Thomas Gray

(Born 1716 — Died 1771)

The author of the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, one of the most famous English poems, was an erudite classic scholar, a naturalist and musician. He lived a quiet and retired life, associating but little with the literati of the period. He began by writing verse in Latin, and on taking up English verse practised the form of the ode. He wrote little, made endless painstaking revisions and was never satisfied with his work. His best known odes are *The Bard* and *The Progress of Poesy*. The latter is a compressed history of poetry from times primitive to mid-eighteenth century.

The passages on Shakespeare and Milton, characteristic of the later 18th century worship of those poets, are justly celebrated:

To Him the mighty Mother did unveil
Her awful face; the dauntless Child
Stretch'd forth his little arms, and smiled.
"This pencil take (she said), whose colours clear
Richly paint the vernal year;
Thine too those golden keys, immortal Boy!
This can unlock the gates of Joy;
Of Horror that, and thrilling Fears,
Or open¹ the sacred source of sympathetic Tears."

Nor second He, that rode sublime
Upon the seraph wings of Ecstasy,
The secrets of th' Abyss to spy.

He pass'd the flaming bounds of Place and Time;
The living Throne, the sapphires blaze,
Where Angels tremble, while they gaze,
He saw; but blasted with excess of light,
Closed his eyes in endless night.

If the diction of the odes is rather stilted and grandiose, after the fashion of the day, Gray, on occasion, very aptly mocked him-

¹ open — upon (poet.)

self and his contemporaries: in the clever self-parody *Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold-fishes* classical devices, such as apostrophe, personification, periphrase, the moralistic flourishes, are certainly comical. Gray was seeking for new modes of feeling and expression. Of these the Elegy given below is the best specimen. He became one of the forerunners of sentimentalism in European literature. Sentimentalists prided themselves on cultivating ideals of simplicity, of spontaneous feeling (as opposed to the calculating understanding), of rustic scenes remote from the "madding crowd" — a phrase that Gray made proverbial.

His Elegy won universal recognition and was translated into many languages. Zhukovsky is the author of a well-known Russian version of the poem.

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

(1751)

- 1 The curfew tolls the knell of parting¹ day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.
- 5 Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds:
- Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower,
16 The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.
- Hark! how the sacred calm that breathes around,
Bids every fierce tumultuous passion cease;
15 In still small accents whispering from the ground,
A grateful earnest² of eternal peace.
- Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
20 The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.
- The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

¹ parting — departing, dying

² earnest — here: pledge

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care;
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

20 Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe¹ has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition² mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
30 Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry,³ the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike th' inevitable hour:
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault⁴
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

40 Can storied urn,⁵ or animated bust,
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke⁶ the silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
50 Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;⁷
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre:

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time⁸ did ne'er unroll;
60 Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,⁹
And froze the genial current of the soul.

¹ glebe — earth, turf, a field (*poet.*)

² Ambition — *here:* proud men belonging to the higher aristocracy

³ boast of heraldry — family pride, pride of high descent

⁴ fretted vault — the arched roof of the church ornamented with carvings

⁵ storied urn — burial urn adorned with historical representations

⁶ provoke — *here:* to arouse, to call forth

⁷ pregnant with celestial fire — full of heavenly fire

⁸ spoils of time — *here:* knowledge accumulated in the course of time

⁹ Penury repress'd their noble rage — poverty prevented them from developing their talents

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

60

Some village Hampden,¹ that, with dauntless breast,
The little tyrant of his fields² withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood,

65

The applause of listening senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes

Their lot forbade: nor circumscrib'd³ alone

70

Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind;

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,

75

Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride⁴
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd⁵ vale of life

80

They kept the noiseless tenour of their way.

Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect,
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

85

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse,⁶
The place of fame and elegy supply;
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

¹ Hampden — an English squire who refused to pay the tax of ship money arbitrarily imposed by Charles I; this refusal was one of the main incidents preceding the Civil War of the 1640's

² the little tyrant of his fields — the landlord

³ circumscrib'd — here: limited

⁴ heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride. — to flatter rich patrons of art

⁵ sequestered — lonely

⁶ unlettered muse — uneducated poet

For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
20 This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,¹
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
35 E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted² fires

For thee,³ who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance,⁴ by lonely contemplation led,
100 Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate, —

Haply⁵ some hoary-headed swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn,

105 "There at the foot of yonder nodding beech,
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by,

"Him have we seen the greenwood side along,
110 While o'er the heath we bled,⁶ our labour done,
Oft as the woodlark piped her farewell song,
With wistful eyes pursue the setting sun.

"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;
115 Now drooping, woeful-wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

"One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
Along the heath and near his favourite tree
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
120 Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he:

¹ this pleasing anxious being e'er resigned — over resigned himself to part from life

² wonted — usual

³ thee — Gray means himself

⁴ chance — here: by chance

⁵ haply — perhaps

⁶ bled — hurried

"The next, with dirges due in sad array
 Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne, —
 Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
 Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn."¹

THE EPITAPH

- 125 *Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth*
A youth, to Fortune and to Fame unknown;
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own
- Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,*
 130 *Heav'n did a recompense as largely send;*
He gave to Mis'ry (all he had) a tear,
He gain'd from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.
- No farther seek his merits to disclose,*
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
 135 *(There they alike in trembling hope repose),*
The bosom of his Father and his God

COMMENTS

The Elegy, short as it is, was the work of at least six years. It was meant to fulfil Gray's ideal of poetic worth. In his own words, "extreme concisionness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical, is one of the grand beauties of lyric poetry". This is an approximation of the classical ideal, and yet the Elegy bears the seeds of a new development in literature.

The poem opens when the landscape has, by degrees, been emptied of both sights and sounds. Dusk descends upon the earth and throws a veil of melancholy over the descriptions and the moral reflections of the poet. The charm of the Elegy largely depends on the adroit shifts from concrete individual facts to general and abstract considerations. From the striking presentation of gathering darkness there is an almost imperceptible transition to the churchyard that seems even more thickly enveloped by it than the rest of the village. To the eternal sleep enjoyed by the dead Gray contrasts a number of vivid, though negatively worded pictures

¹ In the original version these words were followed by a stanza Gray afterward omitted, because he thought it unjustified by the context:

There scatter'd oft, the earliest of the Year,
 By hands unseen, are show'rs of Violets found;
 The Red-breast loves to build and warble there,
 And little Footsteps lightly print the Ground.

of what they had been and done whilst living until, finally, their doings are expressed in positive terms ("Oft did the harvest..." etc.). Thence there is a turn to abstract moral notions. The poet appeals to the great and powerful not to despise the humble sports of the villagers, since, on the one hand, all are mortal, and death comes as the greatest of all levellers, and on the other hand, among the humble dead there may have been fine and gifted natures, well qualified to add to their country's lists of glory.

Though the poet deplores the state of things that kept the cottagers from realizing their innate possibilities, he points out that this also kept them from sharing in the vices of the great. Gray's delineation of tyrants, of politicians who sacrificed the welfare of nations to ambition and greed is entirely in the spirit of the age of Reason and Enlightenment, of its favourite contrast of modest worth and the cruel presumptuousness of the great. From these high-toned generalizations Gray goes back to the humble graves of the poor, only to lapse into abstractions on the subject of mortality and to wind up with premonitions of his own death and epitaph.

Throughout these manifold shifts of thought and theme Gray contrives to preserve an essential unity of mood, that of sadness and of pensive earnestness. The very marked preference of things rural and homely to "pomp of power", of the obscurity of private lives to public existence, however glorious, is an early symptom of the sentimental phase in the evolution of English letters.

Gray's affinity with the sentimental ideal is also manifest in the essential interdependence of nature and mind in his elegy: the poet invests his surroundings with his own melancholy, which, in its turn, is attuned to the gloom of the coming night. It is the sadness of the poet that makes him think of evening as the death of day and of the curfew as a funeral bell ("The curfew tolls the knell of parting day"). But at the same time his sorrow grows with the deepening dusk and the solemn stillness.

The landscape drawn by Gray was reproduced in the verse of dozens of imitators: the ivy-mantled tower, the owl, the moon, the yew-trees and the elms, solitude and darkness were given a place of honour in an endless variety of sentimental effusions.

The art of Gray is generally admitted to be transitional in its mingling the grand, scholarly manner and most commonplace matter. Though the Elegy stands for a new mood and a new state of mind, its stylistics is on the whole conventionally classical. Periphrase (*narrow cell for coffin, rude forefathers of the hamlet for old farmers, pious drops for tears*), personification ("Let not Ambition mock their useful toil...", "Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile..."), numerous metonymies ("the harvest to the sickle yields", "these bones from insult to protect"), the abstract nature of the imagery ("silent dust", "cold ear of Death", "celestial fire",

"unple page", "frail memorial") are all typical of the traditional forms of classical poetry. According to his editor, "not a phrase of Gray's poetry but has its sanction in some earlier usage". The vocabulary is elevated and abstract, words like *Ambition*, *Grandeur*, *annals*, *Heruldry*, *pomp*, *power*, *glory*, *Memory* prevailing over those of colloquial usage.

But new notes, new words and phrases are unmistakable too: the lowing herd, the ploughman who "homeward plies his weary way", the beetle that "wheels his droning flight", the "drowsy tinklings" which "lull the distant folds", the swallow "twittering from the straw-built shed", — these are small individual details belonging to a new mode of poetic feeling.

That new mode shows in the lyrical elements of the poem. In the very first stanza the author associates himself with the scenery ("leave the world to darkness and to me"). In the end he appears in his own person. His mind is disclosed in its usual workings along with his habits and peculiarities.

Though the disclosure is objective in tone and the poet introduces himself as he would strike superficial observers, his self-portrait is much more personal than those drawn by Pope or Johnson.

It is in harmony with the purely descriptive part of the poem: it is dominated by the same quiet, mournful and yet restrained feeling, kept well under control. The balance of all contradictory elements, — in thought, mood, and diction, — is preserved throughout. Vivid flashes of life alongside scenes of death and desolation, flights of poetic imagination, such as the similes of gems and flowers (lines 52—56) in the midst of philosophical disquisitions, are nicely balanced so as to form one harmonious whole. The sorrow of death is inseparable from the joys of life, the plain and unadorned graves — from the dignity and high merit of those who lie in them. Melancholy prevails but it is never unrelieved and never carried to extremes.

Every new phenomenon is rendered both in its auditory and visual aspects: the glimmering landscape whose stillness is only broken by the droning of beetles, the dark towers inhabited by hooting owls affect the senses of hearing and sight alike.

Gray employs the ballad stanza, i.e. quatrains of iambic lines, with the rhyme-scheme *a b a b*, but instead of the four-and-three stress lines of the ballad, he adheres to the five-stress iambic (pentameter) lines of classic verse. This is the so-called elegiac stanza, with four lines of heroic verse alternately rhyming. The rhythm of the poem is slow and stately, as befits an elegy where the feeling, though strong in sorrow, is never excessive and always subordinate to reflection. Long vowels or diphthongs predominate, particularly in the rhymes (in 54 out of the 64 rhymes of the poem). The slow pace of the Elegy accords well with the unhurried

meditations of the poet. In the 1st stanza the prevalence of long vowels is appropriate to the plaintive tolling of the bell, the slow step of the tired ploughman, and the gradual descent of darkness. In the second line the sense of slowness and heaviness is also impressed upon the reader with the help of the spondee:

The lowing herd | wind slowly o'er | the sea...

○ — | ○ — | — — | ○ — | ○ —

The three stressed syllables following close upon one another are expressive of the heavy tread of the herd. Wherever possible, sense is strengthened by sound:

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,

The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,

The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn...

Alliteration and assonance suggest to our ear the common sounds of village life.

In spite of much that is still traditionally classical in Gray's style, — Wordsworth is well known to have treated a poem of his as a specimen of conventional "poetic diction", — there is a freshness in the feeling and music of the *Elegy*, in its insistence on the unpretentious everyday experience of everyman that place its stanzas at the opening of a new stage in the history of English poetry.

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. What mood is set by the three introductory stanzas of the poem? Point out words which, in your opinion, contribute most to the atmosphere of these stanzas.

2. Quote the stanzas most remarkable for poetic feeling.

3. Which stanzas are devoted to philosophical reflections? Comment upon them.

4. What do we learn of the poet himself, his way of life and disposition? Comment on the epitaph Gray suggests as appropriate to his own self.

5. How far can the author's social leanings and sympathies be gathered from the *Elegy*? Quote the stanzas illustrative of his views.

6. Name the stanzas that mark a shift in mood or thought. By what words are these transitions introduced?

7. Draw up a list of words and phrases pertaining to "poetic diction".

8. Cite instances of inversion in the *Elegy*. Define its stylistic function.

9. Which words would you call prevalent in the poem, those of Germanic or Romanic origin?

10. Enumerate the abstract nouns used by Gray. Analyse their stylistic value.

11. Does Gray employ obsolete words? Give examples, if any.

12. Interpret the following lines:

Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap...

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault

If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise...

Can storied urn, or animated bust,

Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?

13. What sort of tropes are those used in lines 52—55? How are they introduced?

14. Mention the lines or stanzas that strike you as particularly melodious. How does the melody accord with the meaning of the stanzas?

Oliver Goldsmith

(Born 1728 — Died 1774)

This is Goldsmith's¹ second poem. The first was *The Traveller* (1764), whose lyrical passages go hand in hand with reflections on the way of life adopted in various countries, with criticism of despotism and injustice. The conception of England as a country where the rich lord it over the poor is taken up in *The Deserted Village*.

A description of the village of the author's childhood, the poem is much more than a piece of sentimental autobiography. It is one of the earliest poetic indictments of the evils of the agrarian revolution that closely followed upon the industrial revolution of the later 18th century. The poem contrasts idealized pictures of olden days, before the commons (the land belonging to peasant communities) began to be enclosed by the landlords for the purpose of extensive sheep-breeding, — and subsequent decolation. The extract given below is the beginning of the poem, an invocation of the happy past and a lament over its decay brought on by tyrannical abuse of power. This is followed first by portraits of the village's most important personages, the clergyman and the school-master, next by protest against the cruelty of the rich and then by a glowing tale of the cottagers who have to leave their home for the misery and corruption of town life or for foreign lands. Goldsmith winds up with a moralizing apostrophe to Poetry:

Aid slighted truth; with thy persuasive strain
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
Teach him, that states of native strength possess'd,
Though very poor, may still be very bless'd.

¹ See introductory note to Goldsmith in *Three Centuries of English Prose*, Leningrad, 1907.

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

The opening part of the poem has been translated by Zhukovsky.

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

(1770)

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's ling'ring blooms delay'd:
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loiter'd o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endear'd each scene;
How often have I paus'd on every charm,
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topp'd the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made;
How often have I bless'd the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree;
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old survey'd;
And many a gambol frolick'd o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round;
And still as each repeated pleasure tir'd,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspir'd;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown,
By holding out to tire each other down;
The swain mistrustless¹ of his smutted face,
While secret laughter titter'd round the place;
The bashful virgin's side-long looks of love,
The matron's glance that would those looks reprove:
These were thy charms, sweet village; sports like these,
With sweet succession, taught e'en toil to please;
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,
These were thy charms — But all these charms are fled.

¹ mistrustless — unsuspicious

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn:
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green:
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain:¹
No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But chok'd with sedges, works its weedy way.
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
Sunk are thy bowers, in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'ertops the mould'ring wall;
And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
Far, far away, thy children leave the land.

Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroy'd, can never be supplied.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintain'd its man;
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life requir'd, but gave no more;
His best companions, innocence and health;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are alter'd; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn, where scatter'd hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth, and cumbrous pomp repose;
And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that ask'd but little room,
Those healthful sports that grac'd the peaceful scene,
Liv'd in each look, and brighten'd all the green;
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

¹ half a tillage stints thy smiling plain — the land remaining half-tilled is stinted, i. e. cannot yield a rich harvest

Sweet Auburn! parent of the blissful hour,
 Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.
 Here as I take my solitary rounds,
 Amidst thy tangling walks, and ruin'd grounds,
 And, many a year elaps'd, return to view
 Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew,
 Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
 Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.

COMMENTS

The poem moves in a series of contrasting pictures of past joy and present sorrow. These are expressive as some of the 18th century best known juxtapositions of rural life with its supposed virtues and city life with its alleged vices. The first are commonly associated with the universal benevolence and innocence of nature, the latter with venality and love of gain. This juxtaposition definitely belongs to the clichés of 18th century English literature. It is much in evidence both in Pope and Johnson, though with these the glories of the country are perfectly abstract and artificial. Pope's own garden attached to his house at Twickenham with its intricate planning and its grotto may be looked upon as a sample of the classicist's idea of Nature.

The case of country versus town acquired a new significance in the second half of the century when the Enlightenment reached its more mature stage and found an outlet in Sentimentalism. There it is no longer just a matter of abstract preference of country to town and the consciousness of its moral superiority. The sentimental attitude makes itself felt in the affectionate yearning with which the author lingers over each of the homely details: the "weedy way of the brook", the seats under the hawthorn bush, "for talking age and whisp'ring lovers made", the laughter "that titter'd round the place" at sight of the "smutt'd face" of a country lad, "The dancing pair that simply sought renown, / By holding out to tire each other down" — these are concrete touches that even Gray lacked, to say nothing of Pope or Johnson.

Sentimentalism also determines the emphasis on feeling clearly manifest in the above extract — and in the whole of the poem, for that matter. Goldsmith is careful to notice the lovers, the "virgin's side-long looks of love", the "humble happiness". The author's own feelings repeatedly find expression in the emotional epithets he fixes on the past of the village and in anaphoristic exclamatory lines like:

How often have I loiter'd o'er thy green...
 How often have I paus'd on every charm...
 How often have I bless'd the coming day...

The emotions of the poet colour the choice of words referring to the idealized past: they are one and all of a sentimentally optimistic description. The adjectives are *sweet, lovely, smiling, mirthful, cheerful*, the nouns — *health, plenty, spring, summer, blooms, innocence, ease, sport, happiness*; the verbs — *cheer, please, endear, bless, play, frolic*, etc.

The colouring is decidedly rosy. Even the practical details are safe and reassuring: the cot is *shelter'd*, the farm *cultivated*, the brook *never-failing*, the mill *busy*, the church *decent*. Even toil could *please*, for it was succeeded by sports and play, in which all the village train, swept by one and the same feeling, took part. There is no hint of either hardship or poverty, or weariness. People worked no more than was necessary to enjoy "gambols" and dancing.

The morality of the community seems to have been superior too: virgins were bashful, and the matrons were there to reprove even "side-long looks of love". The contrast between this idyllic picture and the subsequent scene of abandonment is a marked one. No traditional attributes of decay are spared to intensify that contrast: "desolation", "desert walks", "shapeless ruin", "mouldering walls" — none of them have been forgotten. The very birds are solitary and their cries sound hollow. The contrast is contained within one couplet and one object:

No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But chok'd with sedges, works its weedy way.

Life is annihilated, and the brook that used to be "never-failing" has almost dried up. The weeds are a symbol of the neglect and oblivion brought about by the "tyrant" and the "spoiler".

Though new in its concentration on the humble aspects of existence, visualized in a fashion much more concrete than they had been before, *The Deserted Village* is yet in many ways conventional. It is written in heroic couplets, the same that were used (and abused) in classical poetry. It is true that Goldsmith occasionally breaks up the monotony of the couplets by depriving some of them of their finality:

How often have I pau'd on every chara,
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topped the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, etc.

But on the whole, the metrical capacities of the couplet are used traditionally. The rhymes are perfectly simple: *plain — swain, ease — please, day — play, free — tree*.

The diction of the poem is also for the greater part that of the classical period, with *swain* for young farmer, with periphrastic

bowers of innocence and ease and seats of my youth, with charms, sports, matrons and virgins. Nor does Goldsmith omit the antithetical points, as in "the young contending, as the old survey'd", or "talking age and whispering lovers". The traditional features of the diction, the preference for antitheses transpire in the bit of invective beginning with the strong inversion:

Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ill a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade,
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroy'd, can never be supplied.

And yet the obvious elements of classical diction cannot alter the fact that the poem belongs to another phase of development. The appeal to emotions, to tenderness, the lyrical notes, the very slight infusion of abstract nouns, the concrete touches in description, which, though still rather general, are remote from the stiffness of Johnson's diction, the gentle humour mixed with pathos — an anticlassical device — all these are symptoms of a different style in poetry.

Goldsmith is akin to Gray in his praise of country life and country people and in his sorrow over their dismal fate. The difference, however, is that Gray does not go beyond elegiac regrets and speaks about the stunted lives of the villagers as if it were an abstract necessity. Goldsmith is at once less fatalistic and more concrete:

One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain.

This resembles the language of political pamphlets. His poem is an elegy too, but is at the same time an indignant protest.

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. Compare the lines devoted to cottagers in Gray's Elegy and in Goldsmith's poem. How are their toils described?
2. Compare the contrast between town and country life as drawn by Goldsmith and Johnson.
3. Give instances of apostrophe.
4. Give a stylistic analysis of the lines:

Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's ling'ring blooms delay'd.

5. Quote lines with colloquial phrases and words.
6. Summarize Goldsmith's description of England's former prosperity (from "A time there was..." to "...ignorance of wealth").

7. Comment upon the line "And his best riches, ignorance of wealth".

8. Comment upon the line "His best companions, innocence and health". Can these last words be treated as personification?

9. Is their use the same as in the line "Unwieldy wealth, and cumbrous pomp repose"?

10. Pick out the antithetical lines from the paragraph beginning with "But times are altered..."

11. Speak about the meaning of the word *train* in its different contexts.

12. Find instances of concrete and abstract noun usage in the text.

13. What words are most often repeated? Why?

14. What lines and phrases betray the emotions of the poet?

15. What figure is employed in "Sweet Auburn! Parent of the blissful hour..."? Is it typical of Goldsmith?

16. Draw up a list of words used only (or mostly) in poetry and state their colloquial equivalents.

"Nature's sternest painter, yet the best" was Byron's admiring opinion of Crabbe. This opinion was based on Crabbe's disillusioned and factual presentation of the sufferings of the English countryside in the decades immediately succeeding the industrial and agrarian revolution. Crabbe's better-known poems (*The Village*, 1783, *The Parish Register*, 1807, and *The Borough*, 1810) accomplish the task formulated but not wholly carried out by Gray, namely, to record "the short and simple annals of the poor". The first of these poems seems to have been written in reply to Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*. Crabbe is indignant at the idyllic scenes evoked by his predecessor. Almost each of his harsh details corresponds to the gay touches of Goldsmith's descriptions.

Bred in a period when classical modes of expression stood for culture and distinction, Crabbe adhered to the outward trappings of classicism — to the heroic couplet and, partly, to the "poetic diction" of the 18th century. But the latter goes together with a still larger share of colloquialisms, of "low" common nouns appropriate to the stark realism of Crabbe's verse.

The Village is a fairly long descriptive poem with obvious didactic leanings. It portrays the misery and degradation of the peasantry, and traces the dreary stages of their lives, from the back-breaking labour in the fields to the forced idleness of the parish workhouse. Crabbe's later work is, as he puts it, "an endeavour once more to describe village manners, not by adopting the notion of pastoral simplicity, assuming ideas of rustic barbarity, but by more natural views of the peasantry..." The poetry of *The Parish Register* and *The Borough* is more narrative than descriptive, both poems consisting of a number of loosely connected tales. These, according to latest research, are among the early predecessors of the realistic essay that paved the way to mid-nineteenth century critical realism.

THE VILLAGE

(1783)

I grant indeed that fields and flocks have charms
For him that grazes or for him that farms;
But when amid such pleasing scenes I trace
The poor laborious natives of the place,
And see the mid-day sun, with fervid ray,
On their bare heads and dewy temples play;
While some, with feebler heads and fainter hearts,
Deplore their fortune, yet sustain their parts:
Then shall I dare those real ills to hide
In tinsel trappings of poetic pride?

No; cast by Fortune on a frowning coast,
Which neither groves nor happy valleys boast;
Where other cares than those the Muse relates,
And other shepherds dwell with other mates;
By such examples taught, I paint the cot,
As Truth will paint it, and as Bards will not:
Nor you, ye poor, of letter'd scorn complain,
To you the smoothest song is smooth in vain;
Overcome by labour, and bow'd down by time,
Feel you the barren flatt'ry of a rhyme?
Can poets soothe you, when you pine for bread,
By winding myrtles round your ruin'd shed?
Can their light tales your weighty griefs o'erpower,
Or glad with airy mirth the toilsome hour?

Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,
Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor.
From thence a length of burning sand appears,
Where the thin harvest waves its wither'd ears;
Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,
Reign o'er the land, and rob the blighted rye:
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,
And to the ragged infant threaten war;
There poppies, nodding, mock the hope of toil;
There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil;
Hardy and high, above the slender sheaf,
The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf;
O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,
And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade;
With mingled tints the rocky coasts abound,
And a sad splendour vainly shines around.
So looks the nymph whom wretched arts adorn
Betray'd by man, then left for man to scorn;
Whose cheek in vain assumes the mimic rose.

While her sad eyes the troubled breast disclose;
Whose outward splendour is but folly's dress,
Exposing most, when most it gilds distress.

Here joyless roam a wild amphibious race,
With sullen woe display'd in every face;
Who far from civil arts and social fly,
And scowl at strangers with suspicious eye.

Here too the lawless merchant of the main
Draws from his plough th' intoxicated swain;
Want only claim'd the labour of the day,
But vice now steals his nightly rest away.

Where are the swains, who, daily labour done,
With rural games play'd down the setting sun;
Who struck with matchless force the bounding ball
Or made the pond'rous quoit obliquely fall,
While some huge Ajax,¹ terrible and strong,
Engaged some artful stripling of the throng,
And fell beneath him, foil'd, while far around
Hoarse triumph rose, and rocks return'd the sound?
Where now are these? — Beneath you cliff they stand,
To show the freighted pinnace where to land;
To load the ready steel with guilty haste;
To fly in terror o'er the pathless waste;
Or, when detected in their straggling course,
To foil their foes by cunning or by force;
Or, yielding part (which equal knaves demand),
To gain a lawless passport through the land.

Here, wand'ring long amid these frowning fields,
I sought the simple life that Nature yields;
Rapine and Wrong and Fear usurp'd her place,
And a bold, artful, surly, savage race...

COMMENTS

The features of contemporary country life as portrayed by Crabbe are unrelieved in their stern realism. His purpose is, obviously, to give the lie to the sentimentalized notions of rural charms independent of social facts and eternal in their closeness to Nature. Crabbe's *Village* aims at truth unadorned. He knows that "Where Plenty smiles — alas! she smiles for few". The central idea running through the whole of the poem and binding it together is the idea that the usual poetic interpretation of reality is pitifully inadequate. Step by step Crabbe destroys the fiction of the ever green and ever sunny countryside.

¹ Ajax — one of the heroes of the Trojan war (Greek myth.)

The never-failing elements of the pastoral are brought in only to be derisively thrust aside as belonging to the world of fiction: fields and flocks, pleasing scenes and charms, groves and happy valleys, cots, swains, shepherds and their mates, make part of sentimental scenery. All these, according to Crabbe, do not exist in actual life. In his poem they are only echoes, distinct echoes of Goldsmith's *Arcadia*.¹ Crabbe also has Goldsmith in view when he lists the rural games that ideal villagers are supposed to play. But instead of indulging in innocent recreations they are engaged in criminal smuggling activities. Where Goldsmith had seen nothing but gaiety and affectionate fellow-feeling, Crabbe observes guilt, terror, foes, knaves. He opposes "the simple life that Nature yields" to "Rapine and Wrong and Fear". According to Crabbe, — and that is where the essential discrepancy between his conceptions and those of the sentimentalists comes in, — all natural phenomena are, in reality, not friendly but inimical to man. The sun, generally a symbol of hope and happiness, is here cruel, for its "fervid ray" beats on "bare heads and dewy temples"; the sand is burning, the coast is frowning and so are the fields (with Goldsmith they had been all smiles). Nature is cruel even to the youngest children:

There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,
And to the ragged infant threaten war...

When not positively unkind, Nature, with Crabbe, is at least ungracious and chary of her gifts. Thus, we hear about the "withering brake", the "blighted rye", the "slender sheaf", the "sickly blade". In his choice of epithets Crabbe gives marked preference to those indicative of different phases of decay: *withered*, *rank*, *blighted*, *sterile*, *rocky* are in this context highly expressive. Instead of the sunny and friendly green that figures largely in Goldsmith's poem, in Crabbe's rocky coasts, cliffs, burning sands, pathless wastes prevail, all of them being common symbols of sterility and barrenness.

On the few occasions when the drab picture is enlivened by some vivid colouring, those rare spots of beauty are also the enemies of men: poppies are just weeds that "mock the hope of toil", the blue bugloss only "paints the sterile soil", the "silky leaf" of the mallow chokes the growth of the harvest, "mingled tints" appear on the rocky shore, and their splendour is sad and futile. According to the optimistic creed of the earlier stages of the Enlightenment, whose spokesman had been the Earl of Shaftesbury, beauty and goodness and truth are one, and all of them are en-

¹ That Crabbe meant his *Village* to afford a contrast to Goldsmith's is obvious from the following lines:

Since vice the world subdued and waters drown'd,
Auburn and Eden can no more be found.

odied in Nature. With Crabbe the very beauties of Nature are evil. In rather a grandiloquent simile the sad splendour of Nature is likened to the splendour of a prostitute. This simile alone proves how far Crabbe has travelled from the cult of Nature's goodness so typical of 18th century beliefs.

Nor is Crabbe given to another of the commonly received notions of the period, namely, that communion with Nature and keeping away from the "madding crowd" is a warrant of sound morals and peaceful living. In *The Village* the rustics are not the innocent and blissful inhabitants of "sweet Auburn", but "a bold, artful, surly, savage race", "a wild amphibious race". Crabbe's characterization of the natives is in many points achieved with the help of negation: the men are "joyless", "lawless", "far from civil arts and social". Curiously enough, the people are at one and the same time "wild" and "artful", combining the ills of both the civilized and uncivilized state. That is also one of Crabbe's many answers to the idea of the noble savage and the virtuous rustic that had inspired Goldsmith and some of his contemporaries.

Crabbe never tires of exploding these notions. This is particularly obvious in his ironical reminiscences of the recreations enjoyed by the villagers in Goldsmith's idyll:

Where are the swains, who, daily labour done,
With rural games play'd down the setting sun..

Having begun on this elegiac and poetic note, with a metaphorical association of men and natural phenomena, Crabbe cannot keep it up even for a few lines and imperceptibly glides into a most unpastoral style: "Hoarse triumph rose, and rocks returned the sound". Even the recollection of past merry-making turns into a parody of itself. And yet even this parody of mirth is a thing of the past: heavy drinking absorbs the brief leisure of the peasant, who has not much to choose between labour and vice.

These coarse details are deliberately contrasted to the conventional raptures of sentimental poets: "Then shall I dare these real ills to hide / In tinsel trappings of poetic pride?" "Real ills" — i.e. villagers "o'ercome by labour, and bow'd down by time", with "feebler heads and fainter hearts" (a destruction of the pet cliché of pastoral poetry concerning the health and sturdiness of country-folks) — stand out the more clearly by contrast with such poetic conventions as "Muse", "Bard". The contrast is stressed by the antithetical pattern of the following lines:

Can poets soothe you, when you pine for bread,
By winding myrtles round your ruin'd shed?
Can their light tales your weighty griefs o'erpower,
Or glad with airy mirth the toilsome hour?

Soothe contrasts with pine, myrtles both with bread and the ruin'd shed, light tales with weighty griefs, airy mirth with

toilsome hour. The result is that truth and poetry ("Bards"), "real ills" and "finsel trappings of poetic pride" are treated as antipodes.

Antithesis is accompanied by reiteration, which, as likely as not, is a conscious attempt to give additional weight to the words by displaying their different meaning in different contexts. *Fortune*, for example, is used in the sense of 'lot', 'individual destiny' — in the first case, and in the more general sense of 'fate' in the next case, within the space of two lines. The *light toles* of the poets probably have some connection with the "light turf that warms the neighbouring poor". The verb *to yield* has different connotations in the line where smugglers yield part of their booty to knaves like themselves, and in the phrase "the simple life that Nature yields". The first usage appears to reflect ironically on the second. The scenes drawn by Crabbe are more definite than Goldsmith's and that not only historically, in giving first-hand factual knowledge, but in the mode of expression, in the wealth of details described in the plainest, straightforward terms. This transpires, for instance, in the list of "rural games" ("bounding ball", "pond'rous quoit", "oblique fall"), differing essentially from Goldsmith's generalized "frolic" and "sleights of art". The same is true of the passage referring to the agriculture of the village. The impression of exactness in the enumeration not only of plants but their more essential properties and of the author's emphatic indifference to their esthetic value, is partly due to Crabbe's choice of epithets. Most of them are there not for emotional or ornamental effect, but for the sake of imparting precise knowledge: *sterile soil*, *slimy mallow*, *clasping tares*, *prickly arms*, *ragged infant*.

That kind of usage places Crabbe beyond the pale of classicism. Nevertheless, the classicist elements of the poem are still quite palpable. Thus, the elegant euphemism of "dowy" standing for "perspiring" or, worse still, for "sweating", periphrases like "deplore this fortune, yet sustain their parts" and the one referring to the poppies that "mock the hope of toil", or metonymies, such as "the lawless merchant of the main / Draws from his plough th' intoxicated swain", personifications ("Rapine and Wrong and Fear"), — all these prove that Crabbe was thoroughly steeped in classicism. The heroic couplets of the poem are handled with skill, although they lack the pointed perfection of Pope, the vigour of Johnson, the grace of Goldsmith. But Crabbe's verse has a severity and dignity of its own. It is less artificial, less carefully balanced, the couplets being allowed to run on, e.g.:

While some huge Ajax, terrible and strong,
Engaged some artful stripling of the throng,
And fell beneath him...

The inversions are few, the syntax natural, so that the verse lends itself to the intonations of an unhurried story-teller. Though

comparatively rarely, Crabbe still makes occasional use of antithetical structure, — not so much in speaking of the immediate object of his interest, as in his similes, for example, in the one introducing the "nymph":

Betray'd by man, then left for man to scorn;
Whose cheek in vain assumes the mimic rose,
While her sad eye the troubled breast disclose;
Whose outward splendour is but folly's dress
Exposing most, when most it gilds distress.

The rare classical allusions are ironical, as, for example, the mention of Ajax or the nymph. Swains and shepherds with their mates also appear in ironic contrast to the dwariness of the subject.

The excerpt under examination easily divides itself into several long periods, simple in structure, with a predominance of attributive clauses, presenting in detail the aspects introduced by the poet. The intonation is sometimes that of an earnest speaker, expostulating with his interlocutors. Concessions ("I grant indeed"), rhetorical questions, exclamations, retorts, reiterated statements give Crabbe's poem a peculiarly persuasive accent. Ordinary figures of eloquence are altered by Crabbe to suit his purpose: the twice repeated rhetorical query "Where are the swains?" and "Where now are these?" is, contrary to classical custom, immediately answered with the utmost precision: "Beneath yon cliff they stand".

Substituting concrete for abstract terms, using sentimental patterns only to deny them, and employing classical verse for purposes of realistic description — all these give Crabbe's poem the stamp of originality. Written in anger and sorrow, it is a fine piece of polemics wherein established poetic forms are given a new sense and realistically observed features of country life acquire a severe dignity owing to the classical verse form.

The following extract is also taken from *The Village*.

Theirs is yon house that holds the parish poor,
Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;
There, where the putrid vapours, flagging, play,
And the dull wheel hums doleful through the day —
There children dwell, who know no parents' care;
Parents who know no children's love, dwell there!
Heart-broken matrons on their joyless bed,
Forsaken wives, and mothers never wed;
Dejected widows with unheeded tears,
And crippled age with more than childhood fears,
The lame, the blind, and, far the happiest they!
The moping idiot and the madman gay.
Here too the sick their final doom receive,

Here brought, amid the scenes of grief, to grieve,
Where the loud groans from some sad chamber flow,
Mix'd with the clamours of the crowd below;
Here, sorrowing, they each kindred sorrow scan,
And the cold charities of man to man:
Whose laws indeed for ruin'd age provide,
And strong compulsion plucks the scrap from pride;
But still that scrap is bought with many a sigh,
And pride embitters what it can't deny.

Say ye, oppress'd by some fantastic woes,
Some jarring nerve that baffles your repose;
Who press the downy couch while slaves advance,
With timid eye, to read the distant glance;
Who with sad prayers the weary doctor tense,
To name the nameless ever-new disease;
Who with mock patience dire complaints endure,
Which real pain and that alone can cure;
How would ye bear in real pain to lie,
Despised, neglected, left alone to die?
How would ye bear to draw your latest breath,
Where all that's wretched paves the way for death?

Such is that room which one rude beam divides,
And naked rafters form the sloping sides;
Where the vile bands that bind the thatch are seen,
And lath and mud are all that lie between,
Save one dull pane, that, coarsely patch'd, gives way
To the rude tempest, yet excludes the day.
Here, on a matted flock, with dust o'erspread,
The drooping wretch reclines his languid head,
For him no hand the cordial cup applies,
Or wipes the tear that stagnates in his eyes;
No friends with soft discourse his pain beguile,
Or promise hope till sickness wears a smile.

But soon a loud and hasty summons calls,
Shakes the thin roof, and echoes round the walls;
Anon, a figure enters, quaintly neat,
All pride and business, bustle and conceit,
With looks unalter'd by these scenes of woe,
With speed that, entering, speaks his haste to go,
He bids the gazing throng around him fly,
And carries fate and physic¹ in his eye:
A potent quack, long versed in human ills,
Who first insults the victim whom he kills;
Whose murd'rous hand a drowsy Bench² protect,

¹ physic -- medicine (arch.)

² a drowsy Bench -- Crabbe means that the authorities who have appointed the parish physician do not care about his activities

And whose most tender mercy is neglect
 Paid by the parish for attendance here,
 He wears contempt upon his sapient sneer;
 In haste he seeks the bed where Misery lies,
 Impatience mark'd in his averted eyes;
 And, some habitual queries hurried o'er,
 Without reply, he rushes on the door.
 His drooping patient, long inured to pain,
 And long unheeded, knows remonstrance vain;
 He ceases now the feeble help to crave
 Of man, and silent sinks into the grave.

But ere his death some pious doubts arise,
 Some simple fears, which "bold bad men"¹ despise;
 Fain would he ask the parish priest to prove
 His title certain to the joys above:
 For this he sends the murmuring nurse, who calls
 The holy stranger to these dismal walls.
 And doth not he, the pious man, appear,
 He, "passing rich with forty pounds a year"?²
 Ah! no; a shepherd of a different stock,
 And far unlike him, feeds this little flock:
 A jovial youth who thinks his Sunday's task
 As much as God or man can fairly ask;
 The rest he gives to loves and labours light,
 To fields the morning, and to feasts the night;
 None better skilled the noisy pack to guide,
 To urge their chase, to cheer them or to chide;
 A sportsman keen, he shoots through half the day,
 And, skill'd at whist, devotes the night to play.
 Then, while such honours bloom around his head,
 Shall he sit sadly by the sick man's bed,
 To raise the hope he feels not, or with zeal
 To combat fears that e'en the pious feel?

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

4. What is Crabbe's way of describing the squalor of the workhouse? Is his description detailed, graphic? Does it produce the impression of careful selection or exaggerated minuteness? Substantiate your arguments. Which are the more telling details? Which of them contribute most to the sense of grim monotony and hopelessness?

2. Discuss the inhabitants of the workhouse. What role does negation play in their characterization?

¹ A quotation from Shakespeare's *King Henry VIII*.

² A quotation from Goldsmith's portrait of the clergyman in *The Deserted Village*.

3. Comment upon the lines: "—far the happiest they! / The moping idiot and the madman gay". Do they contrast with the remaining lines of the description?

4. Quote the lines expressive of Crabbe's attitude towards the inhumanity of contemporary life.

5. Whom does Crabbe apostrophize: "Say ye, oppress'd by some fantastic woes", etc.? What role does this period play in the whole structure of the above extract?

6. Divide the text into parts (paragraphs). Name the subject of each of them. Discuss the way the transition from one to the other is achieved. At what point does Crabbe go back to his main subject?

7. Enumerate the materials mentioned by Crabbe in his description of the workhouse.

8. Analyse the epithets used by Crabbe. Are they poetical, ornamental, striking?

9. Summarize the portraits of the doctor and the clergyman. Is there any likeness between the two?

10. Give examples of skilful use of antithesis in the portrait of the doctor. Explain the line "And whose most tender mercy is neglect".

11. Explain the function of Crabbe's quotation from Goldsmith.

12. Which part of the doctor's portrait is most charged with irony? Comment upon the use of words like *shepherd* and *flock*.

13. Quote the rhetorical questions occurring in the extract.

14. Name some lines that go beyond the limits of the regular couplet.

Robert Burns wrote poetry in English and in the Scottish vernacular. Before his time the latter had been employed by several poets when dealing with the life of the Scottish peasantry, whom the poets felt to be somewhat outside their own sphere. Burns, however, was proud to belong to that class. He used their dialect with a greater earnestness of purpose and made it a medium of his own feelings and thoughts. In English Burns hardly went beyond imitative verse.

And yet, while writing in his native Scottish, Burns became a poet who belongs to the culture of the English no less than to that of the Scots.

In their anxiety to prove the originality of Burns, his admirers often maintain that he defies classification and stands apart. This is hardly the case. On the one hand, he adhered to the tradition paved by the masters of Scottish poetry, such as Lyndsay, Ramsay or Fergusson; on the other hand, however great his originality, Burns became a part — the culminating part — of English literature in the last period of the Enlightenment, with its worship of nature, of rustic life and spontaneous feeling. True, his humour, his firm grasp of the world of realities, his rich sensualism, separate him from most of his fellow-poets, but, nonetheless, his deeply-rooted irreverence for wealth and title, his insight into the various aspects of emotional experience, his affection for and understanding of common people, his first-hand knowledge of popular poetry link him with the literary movements of his time.

Burns had no great respect for book-learning:

What's a' your jargon o' your schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools;
If honest nature made you fools,
What sairs your grammars?

Ye'd better tak'en up¹ spades and shoals
Or knappin' hammers.

(*Epistle to John Lapraik, an Old Scottish Bard, 1785*)

And yet, in his distrust of the tenets of the church, in his defence of the rights of the individual, in his admiration of the French Revolution, in his hatred of intolerance and cruelty he was true to the spirit of the Age of Reason.

An honest man may like a glass,
An honest man may like a lass,
But mean revenge and malice lause,
He'll still disdain,
And then cry zeal for gospel laws,
Like rome we ken.

They take religion in their mouth;
They talk o' mercy, grace, and truth.
For what? — to gie their malice skouth
On some poor wight,
And hunt him down, o'er right and ruth
To ruin straight.

(*Epistle to the Reverend John M'Math, 1785*)

Burns was ever ready to uphold intellectual and moral freedom as man's most sacred heritage and to denounce all those who interfere with that freedom.

May Liberty meet wi' success,
May prudence protect her frae evil!
May tyrants and tyranny line in the mist,
And wander their way to the devil!

Here's freedom to him that wad read,²
Here's freedom to him that wad write!
There's nae one ever fear'd that the truth should be heard,
But they whom the truth wad indite.

(*Here's a Health to Them That's Awa', 1792*)

In his life-time Burns published several volumes of poetry, consisting of songs, ballads, lyrics, epigrams, the tale of *Tam o'Shanter*, the cantata of the *Jolly Beggars*, the poem *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, etc. Many of his lyrical pieces were written to the tune of popular songs (*My Love Is Like a Red, Red Rose; It Was upon a Lammis Night* and others). One of them became something of a national anthem:

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to min'?

¹ ye'd better tak'en up — you ought to have taken up (for Scottish words see Glossary on pp. 62–63)

² here's freedom to him that wad read — let us drink to the freedom of those who are eager to read

Should auld acquaintance be for,
 And auld lang syne?¹
 For auld lang syne, my dear,
 For auld lang syne,
 We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
 For auld lang syne!

fierce, bu

(Auld Lang Syne.)

Russian readers have long been familiar with the poetry of Burns both in the original and in translation. The most popular translations are those made by S. Marshak.

IS THERE, FOR HONEST POVERTY

(1794)

Is there, for honest poverty,
 That hangs his head, and a' that?
 The coward slave we pass him by,
 We dare be poor for a' that!
 For a' that, and a' that,
 Our toils obscure, and a' that,
 The cask is but the guinea-stamp,
 The man's the gowd for a' that!

What tho' on hamely fare we dine,
 Wear bodden gray, and a' that?
 Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
 A man's a man for a' that!
 For a' that, and a' that,
 Their tinsel show, and a' that;
 The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
 Is king o' men for a' that!

You see yon birkie ca'd a lord,
 Wha struts, and stares, and a' that;
 Though hundreds worship at his word,
 He's but a coof for a' that!
 For a' that, and a' that,
 His riband, star, and a' that,
 The man of independent mind,
 He looks and laughs at a' that!

A king can mak a belted² knight,
 A marquis, duke, and a' that;
 But an honest man's aboon his might,
 Guid faith, he maunna fa' that!

¹ auld lang syne ['old 'læŋ 'saɪn] — days of long ago; the expression is now used in English too

² belted — girl with a belt as an honorary

For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may —
As come it will for a' that —
That Sense and Worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, and a' that.
For a' that, and a' that,
It's comin' yet for a' that,
That man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that!

COMMENTS

This song has been justly called the Scottish "Marseillaise". It is indeed a veritable Declaration of Rights, an assertion of independence and equality. Never before had political conceptions been set forth in so lively and vigorous a manner. Abstract cruel comes alive and carries a new and fuller conviction.

The supposed singer is a farmer, one of those plain and sturdy yeomen who, Burns believed, were the salt of the earth. Every word of the song is in character — for politics have become part of the singer's moral being, of his mental make-up. The idea blends with emotion and is here voiced with all the intensity of spontaneous revolt against an outworn tradition.

That blend is achieved because ideas are rendered in terms that are perfectly adapted to the assumed character: a plain labouring man, he speaks about plain things that do not in the least resemble abstract propositions. Naturally enough, Burns's man sees a lord as one who has a riband and a star, as one who "struts and stares", which not only is in character, but also gives to the poem the authentic ring that nothing else can supply so convincingly, and at the same time reduces things to their true dimensions and makes it clear that "hundreds worship" only a "linsel shaw" that is, at best, ridiculous. To this "show" common justice is sacrificed: poor men wear coarse clothes and eat coarse food, while the rich enjoy the best of everything. But this juxtaposition is made only to assert the superiority of the former over the latter. With Burns, clearly, it is not a question of having, but a question of being: an honest man in homely clothes is worth a score of knaves, however fine. Moral dignity, human dignity is what Burns swears by and upholds by all the means in his power. Independence of mind, pith of sense, pride of worth — these are the things by which to tell a man in the sense Burns attaches to that word. Lack of these deserves contempt and the poet dispenses it freely. In this matter again Burns is true to

the assumed character: the contempt he utters is not fierce, but rather good-natured, though nonetheless crushing (3rd stanza).

The contrast between the good-humoured tone ("The man of independent mind, / He looks and laughs at a' that!") and the seriousness of the charge, between inner worth and homeliness, as well as that between outward pomp and worthlessness, is central to Burns's conception of honest poverty as defended by one who has grasped the absurdity of the social order but is too secure in his own merit to break out in violent recrimination. He knows what he is and can afford to be quietly facetious and humorous. There is no word that betrays passion or wrath: "fools", "knaves", "birkies", "coofs" are, after all, rather mild designations. The lords are comical rather than evil figures. The worst thing we learn is that they "strut and stare". Moreover, in his contempt the speaker is ready to let them keep their privileges ("Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine") — these privileges cannot dispossess him who is the real lord of creation — the honest fellow. Once again it is with sound realism that Burns makes his hero think in terms of his class and his time: a fine man is likened to a man of high rank, or even to a king.

The cottager revealed to us in Burns's poem is a realistically conceived personality of emotional and intellectual endowments, far removed from the purely abstract and passive villagers described by Goldsmith or even Crabbe.

Since the singer is a Scottish peasant the use of the vernacular is vital — first of all for the sake of comprehensive characterization, since it puts a stamp of veracity on the personality of the hero. For another thing, it adds to the effect of spontaneity in completely cancelling all bookishness. Besides, the vernacular lends a fresh zest to the poem by bringing in words that to English readers are new and yet understandable within the given context. Finally, the Scottish dialect is naturally associated with rustic life and with popular songs and therefore really indispensable for Burns's purposes.

Like the overwhelming majority of the poet's lyrics, this piece is written to the tune of a well-known song — *For A' that and A' that*, and Burns seizes upon familiar words to alter and remake them to suit his own artistic conceptions. In the present case he takes up a jaunty metre, the ballad-measure, with its usual alternation of four-and-three-foot lines. But within this common pattern Burns introduces some variety: contrary to custom, it is the first and third lines only that rhyme, while the second and fourth repeat the words of the refrain (*and a' that, for a' that*); in the refrain the first line is reduced to two amphibrachic feet, and carries only the key-words (*for a' that, and a' that*) and there are no rhymes, except for the repetition of the key-words. Thus, in each stanza the key-words are repeated six times in the following order: *and a' that, for a' that, for a' that, and a' that, and a' that, for a' that*, with the

result that there is both variety and monotony in the arrangement. The same is true of the metre of the whole poem: there are variations within the stanza, but its pattern is repeated each time, bringing it close to the rhythm of the song. In this way the gay, care-free ring of the poem is still more obvious.

The latter is largely due to the words of the refrain. The key-words (*a' that*) are used in two different contexts: in *and a' that*, meaning 'and the like', 'and so on', and in *for a' that*, meaning 'in spite of that'. In the first case they express disdain ("their tinsel show, and a' that", "a marquis, duke and a' that"); in the second case they stand for quiet dignity ("the man's the gowd for a' that"). This is an important part in the variety and uniformity effect given by the poem and in bringing it close to a popular song, generally rich in repetitions.

The rhythm, the intonation are supported by the diction of the poem: it is absolutely simple and colloquial, the few metaphors are plain and hardly poetic according to the 18th century notions ("The rank is but the guinea-stamp, / The man's the gowd for a' that"). Where abstractions put in an appearance they are brought down to earth by the plural form ("their dignities and a' that") or else by the sudden use of the medial rhyme, of dialect forms and the scornful refrain of "and a' that":

That Sense and Worth, e'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, and a' that.

The metaphors themselves are by and by reduced to literal meaning: thus, in the lines

The honest man, though e'er see poor,
Is king o' men, for a' that!

the metaphor is explained away by the simple assertion that "an honest man is above the might of a king". That high sense of moral dignity coupled with the belief that a man's a man in spite of everything that belittles him is the foundation of the poet's optimism. The hope of future brotherhood expressed in the pathos of the last stanza comes doubly strong after the fine humour of the preceding stanza and through the influence of this humour is purged from fashionable sentimentality with its usual tearful ingredients.

IT WAS A' FOR OUR RIGHTFU' KING

(1794)

It was a' for our rightfu' king
We left fair Scotland's strand;
It was a' for our rightfu' king
We e'er saw Irish land, my dear,
We e'er saw Irish land.

Now a' is done that men can do,
And a' is done in vain;
My love and native land fareweel,
For I maun cross the main, my dear,
For I maun cross the main.

He turn'd him right, and round about,
Upon the Irish shore;
And gae his bridle-reins a shake,
With adieu for evermore, my dear,
Adieu for evermore.

The sodger frae the wars returns,
The sailor frae the main;
But I hae parted frae my love,
Never to meet again, my dear,
Never to meet again.

When day is gane, and night is come,
And a' folk bound to sleep,
I think on him that's far awa',
The lee-lang night, and weep, my dear,
The lee-lang night, and weep.

COMMENTS

Before we start with the comments proper, a few words about the historical events are needed to make clear the background of the poem.

After King James II was dethroned in 1688 and driven into exile for his endeavours to re-establish the principles of absolute monarchy and the Catholic church, several unsuccessful attempts were made to restore the House of Stuart. The most important of these occurred in 1745. Charles Edward, grandson of James II, landed in Scotland and skilfully played up Scottish discontent with English rule, with the loss of national independence and the concomitant economic oppression. A great many of the common folk of Scotland joined the Tory supporters of the Pretender, in the naïve hope that a Scottish king (the Stuarts had been kings of Scotland before James I became monarch of both countries in 1603) would see to it that justice should be done by them. The rebellion was crushed, the rebels cruelly suppressed or forced to flee for their lives to the Continent. Being a republican at heart, Burns repeats the words of the song about the "rightful king" with something of a sad irony. He feels for the deluded victims of the Pretender much more than for his hopeless cause: "The Stuarts have been condemned

and laughed at for the folly and impracticability of their attempts in 1715 and 1745. That they failed, I bless God, but cannot join in the ridicule against them."

The poem is a ballad set to the tune of a popular song. As is often the case with ballads, the events are told by several narrators. In the first two stanzas it is the hero who speaks, in the third the author, and in the last two the story is taken up by the girl. All of them speak in character: the man stresses the political aspect of things as he sees them (and his view should not be taken for that of the poet himself), the author keeps strictly to fact and the girl, the real heroine of the piece, dwells only on the emotional disaster it has brought upon her. Thus in the concise words of a short ballad the same events are treated three times, each time in a new fashion, pointing out different aspects of the affair.

The poem is a masterpiece in its perfect blend of the historical and the individual, of mood, melody and diction. The feelings actuating the characters are simple and powerful, as is their story. Sadness refuses to be shut out and permeates every word. The important ones, those creating the atmosphere, are *left* (followed, nostalgically, by *fair Scotland*), *ever*, *in vain*, *fareweel*, *adieu for evermore*, *parted*, *never*, *gone*, *far awa'*, *weep*. As befits a ballad, absolute simplicity is preserved: not a word but belongs to popular poetry. The greatest effect is achieved by repetition of the simplest words, such as the verb *do* in the 2nd stanza:

Now a' is done that men can do,
And a' is done in yon . . .

The quiet dignity of a man who has fought for his cause to the last and calmly envisages defeat is here deeply moving.

The epithets are few and none of them of the ornamental "literary" type. They are all in the approved tradition of folk-lore. Scotland (or any land, for that matter) is, of course, *fair*; she is the *native land* — a phraseological unit almost indissoluble in poetry; the king is *rightful*. The only epithet that is original happens to be the one word of the poem that is vernacular not only phonetically or graphically (as *frae* or *gone*), but lexically, and therefore to the non-Scots incomprehensible if out of context: *the lee-lang nigh* with its long vowel and its alliteration on the consonant *l* comes as an emotional culmination expressed in the language of the people and remote from literary association.

The syntax is also simplicity itself. The sentences are short, each with no more than one subordinate clause. The direct order of words, such as is used in colloquial speech, is adhered to, with the single emphatic construction in the initial line, which, on the whole, is in keeping with the word-order of common usage and, thanks to the word *a'* (*all*), has a characteristically folk-lorish ring ("It was a' for our rightfu' king / We left fair Scotland's strand").

Granted the utmost simplicity of action.

Intensity is achieved by means of expressive parallel and antithetical structure typical of folk-lore. For instance:

It was a' for our rightfu' king
We left fair Scotland's strand;
It was a' for our rightfu' king
We o'er saw Irish land...

or:

The sodger frae the wars returns, The sailor frae the main...	} parallelism	} antithesis
But I hae parted frae my love, Never to meet again...		

Returns is opposed to *parted*, *parted* to *meet*.

Another example of antithesis: "When day is gane, and night is come".

There is a parallelism and a sort of crude symmetry in the whole structure of the ballad, with the first two stanzas speaking for him, the last two for her, and the intermediate third for the narrator, the latter being, in contrast to the two speakers, quite matter-of-fact and lending the ballad touches of dynamic energy and concrete imagery:

He turn'd him right, and round about...
And gae his bridle-reins a shake...

The verbs and the adverbs render more than the action — the very gestures of the man, and the ballad-like "adieu for evermore" coming close upon the graphic detail of the bridle acquires a certain directness that saves it from the tags of sentimental diction.

The graphic, dynamic and emotional tensivity of the ballad is borne out by the metre — the famous ballad-measure, having the odd lines of four iambs, and the even ones of three, with the first and third lines unrhymed, and the second and fourth possessing an energetic masculine rhyme, generally of the most common description (*strand — land, main — again, etc.*). But Burns handles this stanza with a musicality all his own. To begin with, he puts in a fifth line, with its extra foot made up of the apostrophe "my dear", which is quite natural when uttered by the two characters, but is striking as a sort of represented speech when coming from the narrator. This added line and its added foot do away with the common sing-song of the ballad-measure and lend it an emotional quality that rises to the demands of a tragic situation. In the second place, Burns brings a melody into his lines by a musical arrangement of his consonants ("orchestration").

In the 1st stanza:

w f r f k n g
w i f f a k l i n d a t r n d
w f r f k n g
w a r l n d m d
w a r l n d

In the 2nd stanza:

n d m k n d
n d d n n v n
m l n d n l n d f w l
f m n k r m n m d
f m k r m n

This is not alliteration, but a kind of unobtrusive repetition that forms a pattern agreeable both to ear and eye. The same is true of the melodious dominance of long vowels in the plaintive final stanza.

Lastly, Burns displays a fine musical sense in his use of omission and substitution, without keeping strictly to the iambic scheme. For instance, in the first line instead of the four iambic feet (♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩) expected in a ballad stanza Burns puts ♩ ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩, thus giving freedom to metric form.

In its unity of feeling, music and diction, in the way a dramatic story dealing with real historical happenings is told with a naked simplicity of wording and intonation, which reveals the sufferings of the characters involved without specially dwelling on these sufferings — Burns's poem is a truly lyrical ballad where the historical and the personal elements merge.

WHA IS THAT AT MY BOWER-DOOR

(1783)

Wha is that at my bower-door?
Oh, wha is it but Findlay?
Then gae yere gate, ye're nae be herel —
Indeed maun I, quo' Findlay.
What mak ye me like a thief?
Oh, come and see, quo' Findlay;
Before the morn ye'll work mischief —
Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.
Gif I rise and let you in, —
Let me in, quo' Findlay;
Ye'll keep me waukin wi' your din —
Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.
In my bower if ye should stay, —
Let me stay, quo' Findlay;
I fear ye'll bide till break o' day —
Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.
Here this night if ye remain, —
I'll remain, quo' Findlay;
I dread ye'll ken the gate again, —
Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.

What may pass within this bower, —
 Let it pass, quo' Findlay;
 Ye maun conceal till your last hour, —
 Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. Is the dialogue form used by Burns typical of old ballads?
2. Characterize the two speakers. In what way does Burns disclose their minds?
3. Demonstrate the humorous contrast between the girl's words and her real feelings. Trace her way from one concession to another.
4. How is Findlay's quiet determination brought home? Can his be called an eloquent wooing?
5. Can this love-scene be termed realistic? Prove your point. How would you define the difference between the treatment of a villager in the poems by Burns, Goldsmith and Crabbe?
6. Are there any words in the poem belonging to the sphere of sentiment?
7. Give examples of colloquial and low-colloquial speech.
8. What is the metre of this ballad? Does it in any way deviate from the common ballad-measure? Is it appropriate to the subject of the poem?
9. Point out the refrain and analyse all its meanings in the context.
10. Discuss the stylistic value of repetition.
11. Study this poem in the translation of Marshak. Compare it with the original. Also look up his translation of *Honest Poverty*.

AE FOND KISS

(1791)

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
 Ae fareweel, alas! for ever!
 Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
 Warring ¹ sighs and groans I'll wage ² thee.

Who shall say that Fortune grieves him,
 While the star of hope she leaves him?
 Me, nae cheerfu' twinkle lights me;
 Dark despair around benights me.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy;
 Naething could resist my Nancy!
 But to see her was to love her;
 Love but her, and love for ever.

¹ war — here: to suppress
² wage — here: to pledge

Had we never loved sae kindly,
 Had we never loved sae blindly,
 Never met — or never parted —
 We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Fare thee weel, thou first and fairest!
 Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest!
 'Thine be ilka joy and treasure,
 Peace, Enjoyment, Love and Pleasure!

As fond kiss, and then we sever;
 As farewell, alas! for ever!
 Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
 Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee!

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. What is the mood conveyed by the poet?
2. By whom are these words supposed to be spoken? Picture a situation calling for these words.
3. Does Burns go in for description to make us aware of the mental state of the speaker?
4. How does he begin the poem? Is the repetition of the first stanza at the end of the poem justified?
5. Interpret the lines:

Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
 Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee!

6. Give instances of hyperboles employed by Burns. Would you call them justified?
7. Name the occasions on which Burns departs from colloquial style. Deal with his use of abstract nouns and imagery.
8. Indicate the stanza that might be called the culmination of the poem.
9. Discuss the metre of the poem.
10. Compare this poem with *It Was A' for Our Rightfu' King*. Which do you prefer? State your reasons.

GLOSSARY

a [a:] — all
 aboon [ə'bu:n] — above
 ae [aɪ] — one
 auld [ɔ:lɪ] — old
 awa' [ə'wa:] — away
 bide [baɪd] — stay
 birkie ['bɜ:kɪ] — a smart and affected person

cheerfu' ['tʃɛəfʊ:] — cheerful
 coof [ku:f] — fool
 fa' [fɑ:] — try
 farewell ['fæw'wel:] — farewell
 fause [fɔ:s] — false
 frae [freɪ] — from
 gae [geɪ] — gave
 ga'e [geɪ] — go

gene [ge:n] — gone
 gei [gi:] — give
 gi [gi:] — if
 gowd [goud] — gold
 gree [gri:] — a prize, the highest hon-
 our
 guid [gi:d] — good
 hae [hei] — have
 homely ['hemli] — homely
 bodden gray ['hɔdn 'grei] — coarse
 bodden cloth
 ilka ['ika] — each, every
 indite (in'dait) — indict — accuse
 ken [ken] — know
 knapping ['næp:ŋ] hammers — ham-
 mers that strike
 ho-lang ['hi:leŋ] — lifelong
 mak [mak] — make
 maun [ma:n] — must
 maunne ['ma:n] — must not
 min' [min] — mind
 nae [nei] — no

name [neim] — none
 o' [o:] — of
 pair [pwi:] — poor
 rightfu' ['raɪfu:] — rightful
 ruth [ru:θ] — mercy
 sae [sei] — so
 sair [sɛr] — serve
 se [sei] — shall
 shoole [ʃu:lz] — shovels
 skouth [sku:θ] — scope, freedom
 sulger ['sɔdʒɜ:] — soldier
 tak [ta:k] — take
 time [taim] — time, time one's way
 wad [wɛd] — would
 warld [wɔ:ld] — world
 wankin' ['wɔ:kɪn] — waking
 weel [wi:l] — well
 wha [hwa:] — who
 wham [hwɛm] — whom
 wi' [wi:] — with
 wight [wɪxt] — fellow

Thomas Chatterton

(Born 1752 — Died 1770)

Obscure in his own time, Chatterton won universal recognition in later days. His imagination was so extraordinarily active that it created a world of medieval romance around the Gothic churches and old mansions of his native Bristol. Very early he began to counterfeit ancient documents and histories, at first only as part of his intricate game of make-believe, as part of a poetic dream. Gradually he fell into the spirit of these forgeries and used them less innocently; his fraud was easily recognized as such. The miseries of solitude and want drove him to suicide before he had completed his eighteenth year.

The moral aspect of the problem of Chatterton's authorship is now, of course, immaterial and has been so since his death. The poems he attributed to the monk Thomas Rowley whose fictitious biography he placed in the 15th century are really a phenomenon of 18th century poetry, though Chatterton did his best to transcribe them according to what he mistook for the language of the followers of Chaucer. The boy-poet had no sound knowledge of Middle English, and his spelling and grammar are fantastic, the poems being written in a kind of no-language with wrongly-coined words and phrases. It is, on the whole, Modern English with a sprinkling of arbitrarily formed "old" words and obsolete expressions. To Chatterton it proved a more adequate medium than the "received" literary language of his age: the verse he wrote in that language was mediocre.

Chatterton's impostures came closely on Macpherson's world-famous pseudo-translations of the epics of a legendary Gaelic bard named Ossian. Both fabrications testify to the tastes of a period when the culture of the Middle Ages was eagerly revived and opposed to the prosaic culture of the day as a source of true poetry.

Among the best-known of the Rowley poems are *Bristol Tragedy*, *An Excellent Ballad of Charity*, *Battle of Hastings* and the Songs from the otherwise immature and imitative tragedy of *Aella*.

SONG FROM *AELLA*¹

(Published 1777)

O sing unto my roundelay;²
O drop the briny tear with me,
Dance no more at holy day,
Like a running river be;
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Black his [hair]³ as the winter night,
White his [skin]⁴ as the summer snow,
Red his face as the morning light,
Cold he lies in the grave below;
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Sweet his tongue as the throstle's note,
Quick in dance as thought can be,
Delt his labor,⁵ cudgel stout,
O he lies by the willow-tree;
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Hark! the raven flaps his wing
In the brier'd dell below;

¹ Here is a sample of Chatterton's spelling:

O' syngs unto mie roundelaie,
O' droppe the brynte teare wythe mee,
Daunce no moe attis hallie daie,
Lycke a roynynge ryver bee;
Mie love ys dedde
Gon to hys death bedde,
Al under the wyllowe-tree.

(He does not seem to have known that in Middle English the final *e* was pronounced.)

² sing unto my roundelay — sing to the tune of my roundelay (short simple song with a refrain)

³ black his [hair] — Chatterton uses the word *cryne*

⁴ white his [skin] — Chatterton uses the word *rode* —

⁵ labor — a small drum

Hark! the death-owl loud doth sing
 To the nightmares as they go;¹
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow-tree.

See! the white moon shines on high,
 Whiter is my true love's shroud;
 Whiter than the morning sky,
 Whiter than the evening cloud:
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow-tree.

Here, upon my true love's grave,
 Shall the barren flowers be laid,
 Not one holy Saint to save
 All the coldness of a maid;²
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow-tree.

With my hands I'll [twine] the briars³
 Round his holy corpse to [grow];⁴
 [Elfin]⁵ fairy, light your fires,
 Here my body still shall be.
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow-tree.

Come with acorn-cup and thorn,
 Drain my heart's blood away;
 Life and all its good I scorn,
 Dance by night, or feast by day.
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow-tree.

Water-witches crowned with reyes,⁶
 Bear me to your lethal tide.

¹ Hark! the death-owl loud doth sing... — the owl sings while terrible visions of night glide on

² Not one holy Saint to save... — no saint can save the girl from the cold of lonely maidenhood

³ I'll [twine] — Chatterton uses the word *dente*

⁴ [grow] — Chatterton uses the word *groe*

⁵ [Elfin] fairy — Chatterton writes *Ouphante*, *Ouphen* means 'elves'.

⁶ reyes — water flags

I die! I come, my true love waits.
 Thus the damsel spake and died.
 My love is dead,
 Gone to his death-bed,
 All under the willow-tree.

COMMENTS

The *Song* is Elizabethan in its source. It bears a likeness to Ophelia's songs from *Hamlet*,¹ but goes beyond a mere mechanical imitation and is one of the symptoms of that revival of Shakespeare that characterizes the English literary scene in the second half of the 18th century.

Chatterton abandons the classical models of his own time. Contrary to these, he does not go in for narrative or description, or moral lesson such as distinguish the more characteristic poems of the century. His "song" is also strikingly unlike the lyrical pieces of the period in being utterly irrational. It reads like an irrepressible outbreak of grief that carries the speaker to the borderland of sanity: her lover is dead and nothing else either matters or even exists. In the nine stanzas of the song the anguish of the heroine is voiced in different ways, but the intensity of the feeling is preserved throughout. In the 1st stanza the girl expects all and sundry to share in her sorrow — to join in her lament and to mix their tears with hers. In the 2nd and 3rd she dwells lingeringly on the dead man's perfections. Exquisite pathos is achieved by Chatterton making his heroine use the present tense where logically and grammatically we should expect the past. But to her he remains dark-haired, fair-skinned, sweetly-spoken, quick in dance and skilful at

¹ Compare, for instance:

He is dead and gone, lady,
 He is dead and gone;
 At his head a grass-green turf,
 At his heels a stone.
 White his shroud as the mountain snow,
 Larded with sweet flowers;
 Which bewept to the grave did not go,
 With true-love showers.

Also see:

And will he not come again?
 And will he not come again?
 No, no, he is dead;
 Go to thy death-bed.
 He never will come again.
 His beard was as white as snow,
 All flaxen was his poll;
 He is gone, he is gone,
 And we cast away moan:
 God ha' mercy on his soul!

(*Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene 5)

all manly sports. In the final lines of the 2nd stanza the realization of the truth pulls her up with a wrench:

Cold he lies in the grave below!

and in the 3rd stanza that realization comes with what sounds like a shriek of agony:

O! he lies by the willow tree!

Her own agony spreads over the world around her (stanzas 4 and 5). She has no eyes but for the dark and gruesome aspects of things — the raven, the death owl, the nightmares flitting before its uncanny song, the dismal white moonlight. The very flowers resting on his grave are barren — an epithet most uncommon in connection with flowers. Briefly noting these the heroine goes back to her own feelings. Nothing remains for her but to deck her lover's grave with flowers and to die (stanzas 6 and 7). Elves and fairies are summoned to aid her dying (stanzas 8 and 9).

As distinct from classical or even sentimental poetry there is no room for anything like generality either in thought or in diction. These are not meditations on death, such as were suggested to the poet Young by his sense of personal loss (*Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality*, 1745), or to Gray by his contemplation of the country churchyard, but the very outpourings of extreme personal pain. Chatterton deals both with death and sorrow in perfectly concrete, physical terms. We see the body, the shroud, the grave, the willow tree, the briers. The heroine visualizes her own death with the same absolute grasp of physical detail — her heart's blood must be gradually drained before she can hope to die, but her body is already as cold and still as that of her beloved.

The imagery is that of the popular ballad or of Elizabethan songs. Therefore elves and fairies and witches, important figures in English folk-lore, are appropriate. Their appearance justifies the dainty and delicate lines:

Come with acorn-cup and thorn,
Drain my heart's blood away —

What other medical implements could be handled by a fairy? The acorn-cup, incidentally, may be a reminiscence of the description of the elves in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is also in the spirit of old ballads that the story (such as it is) should be told by one of the personages, in this case by the heroine herself. The feelings and phraseology are perfectly captured. A young country-girl, she concentrates her attention on the physical rather than the psychological characteristics of her lover and renders them in the established imagery of the ballad: "Black his [hair] as the winter night", "Red his face as the morning light".

In the eyes of the girl, the man's skill in dancing and fighting are among his greatest attractions (stanza 3). This, of course, is

also in character. So is her own fascination with dancing. It is mentioned three times — first when the girl begs there should be no such thing on the day of her mourning (stanza 1), secondly, when she admires her dead lover (stanza 3), thirdly, when she names the good things of life she renounces for the sake of her "true love" (stanza 8). The latter appellation is also strictly consistent with the phraseology of the ballad.

The only occasion where Chatterton lapses from speaking in character occurs in the line "Bear me to your *lethal* tide". This bookish word, derived from ancient mythology, seems rather misplaced. The similes (the shroud that is whiter than the white moon), the antitheses of morning and evening in the lines:

Whiter than the morning sky,
Whiter than the evening cloud,

of night and day (in the line "Dance by day and feast by night") are in the style of the popular ballad. They differ from classical antitheses by being concrete, individual and spontaneous.

Characteristically, the imagery is all drawn from nature. The raven, the owl, the white moon, the willow tree are common symbols of sadness often encountered in old ballads. So are certain traditional epithets, such as *briny tear*, *true love*, *cudgel stout*. In the style of the ballad the last line brings the unexpected ending: the lament is only a prelude to the speaker's own death ("Thus the damsel spake and died"). But Chatterton rises superior to stylized imitation. Sometimes these traditional contrasts assume a truly tragical note:

Red his face as the morning light,
Cold he lies in the grave below.

The warmth of the morning and the cold of death, the light of day and the darkness of the grave, the girl's joy in her lover's looks and her sudden recognition of the fact of death are poignantly real.

The poignancy owes a great deal to the refrain with its dolefully repeated tale of irrevocable loss: he is dead and whatever else she may choose to say cannot, even for a moment, relieve her mind. Her unhappiness is the more strongly brought home as it is never once directly mentioned. It is only the manner of speaking, the emotional intensity, the frequent interjections (*O! Hark! See!*), the monotony of the refrain that betray the frenzy of the speaker's despair.

This frenzy is to be felt in the strangely illogical line "White his [skin] as the *summer snow*". This lapse from common sense is the truth of wild grief.

Even religion, in medieval times expected to be a great solace in sorrow, is of no use (stanza 6), since the saints are not holy enough to save her from her misery. Her death is announced tersely in the fourth line of the final stanza.

The effect of the refrain, with its peculiar rhythmical pattern, each of the three short lines having a different number of syllables and stresses, never becomes mechanical and tedious owing to a peculiar blend of uniformity and irregularity. The latter is of vital importance in the last stanza where the tidings of coming death sound in exclamations that break up the rhythm of the stanza by substituting iambus for trochee in the third line:

Water-witches crowned with reyes,
 Bear me to your lethal tide.
 I die! I come, my true love waits,
 Thus the damsel spake and died.

˘ ˘ | ˘ ˘ | ˘ ˘ | ˘
 ˘ ˘ | ˘ ˘ | ˘ ˘ | ˘
 ˘ ˘ | ˘ ˘ | ˘ ˘ | ˘ ˘
 ˘ ˘ | ˘ ˘ | ˘ ˘ | ˘

Chatterton is a master of musical effects (like the anaphora in stanza 5 or the alliteration in stanza 7). The measure of the song is that of the common ballad, but the lines are variously arranged, mostly keeping to four stressed syllables in a line instead of the more usual alternation of four and three stressed syllables per line. The combination of the usual ballad stanza with the comparatively lengthy and metrically irregular refrain introduces a note of discord that matches the sharp black and white colouring and the accent of alternating love and grief.

The archaic tinge created by the pseudo-Middle-English spelling and grammar is essential for the sake of the medieval ballad atmosphere of the poem, the more so as the vocabulary of Chatterton is, with a very few exceptions, quite modern.

MINSTRELS' SONGS FROM *AELLA*

First Minstrel

'The budding flowret blushes at the light;
 'The moss is sprinkled with the yellow hue;
 In daisied mantels¹ is the mountain dight;²
 'The nesh³ young cowslip bendeth with the dew;
 The trees enleafed, unto heaven straught,⁴

When gentle winds do blow, to whistling din is brought.

¹ *mantel* = *mantle* — cloak, covering, garment

² *dight* — clothed, adorned (*etc.*)

³ *nesh* — soft, tender

⁴ *straught* — stretched

The evening comes and brings the dew along;
 The ruddy welkin¹ shineth to the eyne;²
 Around the alestake³ minstrels sing the song;
 Young ivy round the door-post do entwine;
 I lay me on the grass, yet, to my will,
 Albeit⁴ all is fair, there lacketh something still.

Third Minstrel

When Autumn black and sun-burnt do appear⁵
 With his gold hand gilding the falling loaf,
 Bringing up Winter to fulfil the year,
 Bearing upon his back the ripened sheaf,
 When all the hills with woody seed is white;
 When lightning fires and flashes meet from far the sight:

When the fair apple red as even⁶ sky
 Do bend the tree unto the fructile⁷ ground,
 When juicy pears and berries of black dye,
 Do dance in air and call the eyne around,
 Then, be the even foul, or even fair,
 Methinks⁸ my heart's joy is stained with some care.

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. Summarize the distinctive features of Spring in Chatterton's song.
2. What colours dominate in the picture drawn by the poet?
3. Analyse the use of participial forms (*budding, sprinkled, daisied, dight, enleaved*) and their stylistic function.
4. In what way does Chatterton invest his description with life and motion?
5. Compile a list of archaic words. Are they numerous?
6. Which are the most striking features of autumn as depicted by Chatterton?
7. How is Autumn personified? What are his attributes? Are they dignified, refined, classical, abstract?

-
- ¹ welkin — sky
 - ² eyne — eyes
 - ³ alestake — maypole
 - ⁴ albeit — although
 - ⁵ Autumn... do appear — Autumn does appear, appears (Chatterton often mixes up singular and plural forms; compare below: hills ... is white; apple... do bend)
 - ⁶ even — evening
 - ⁷ fructile — fertile
 - ⁸ methinks — it seems to me

8. Note the colouring of Chatterton's autumn. How does it differ from that of spring? What is the difference in the mood of the two songs?

9. What details might be called prosaic?

10. Point out the similes introduced by Chatterton.

11. Give examples of Chatterton's grasp over the world of things physical.

12. What lines are most expressive of the mood of the singer?

13. Analyse the period embracing the two autumn stanzas.

14. What is the metre of the two poems?

One of the most tragic figures in the history of English poetry, Blake was wronged both in his lifetime, when his extraordinary talent was known to no more than a small group of people, and posthumously, when after many years of complete oblivion his art was misunderstood and misrepresented.

Blake belonged to the first generation of Romantic poets whose hatred of the abominations of a fast growing capitalist civilization went hand in hand with enthusiasm for the French Revolution, which, they hoped, would pave the way to brotherhood and equality. Blake loathed the injustice of a world where

Every Night and every Morn
Some to Misery are Born,
Every Morn and every Night
Some are Born to sweet delight,
Some are Born to sweet delight,
Some are Born to Endless Night.

(*Auguries of Innocence*, 1801—1803)

Blake was critical of and alien to the England of his days and ever remained a solitary figure. It was only a few of his earliest poems that he was able to publish (*Poetical Sketches*, 1783, the first book of *The French Revolution*, 1791). After a panic dread of Revolution seized the ruling classes and brought on the political persecutions of the mid-nineties, Blake was no longer able to find a publisher. By profession an engraver, he single-handed and with endless toil engraved all his poems, epic and lyrical, illustrating them with pictures that have been increasingly famous since Blake was "discovered" in the 1860's.

Poet and painter, artist and thinker, Blake also combined the skills of lyricist and satirist. In one of his epigrams (No 61), for

only a symbolic being as an embodiment of surly dogmatism. The inscription of "Thou shalt not" is the beginning of any of the Ten Christian Commandments. The fact that Blake stops short after the very first words makes it clear that what he protests against is not one definite precept of the established creed, but any creed, any dogma whatsoever. The natural sequel to zealous observation of these dogmas and to imposing them upon others is, according to Blake, death. Thence the appearance of graves and tomb-stones where, logically, there is no room for them at all.

The poet breaks away both from the rationalism of the Age of Enlightenment and from the rationalist style of classicism. His own style is the opposite to the ornate, the stately, the elaborate. Blake wishes to be understood by the least sophisticated reader. He writes with the utmost simplicity and purity of diction. Throughout the whole of the poem there is only one epithet, and that the simplest and the commonest — *sweet* (flowers) and only one abstract noun (*Love*). But the latter is employed metaphorically, in a novel and fresh manner ("the Garden of Love"), quite different from the usual style of classicist personified abstractions. It is the only trope used by Blake, apart from the symbols lying at the back of the poem. On the two other occasions when abstract nouns occur they are used in the plural, thus losing their abstract nature: "my joys and desires".

The simplicity of the diction — not one word but belongs to those in common and universal use — is emphasized by the utter simplicity and lucidity of the syntax. There is not a single instance of inversion — the order of words is that of the ordinary spoken language. Blake goes so far as to employ the Perfect forms of verbs — a thing unheard of in classical poetry, unless it was for comical purposes. The use of the same verb in the Past Indefinite and the Past Perfect tense adds to the impression of unstudied and unaffected spontaneity:

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen...

Instead of the dignified periods of classicist poetry Blake favours either simple sentences, or when they are complex and compound, having no more than one or two clauses. The simple colloquial intonation is sometimes due to a slight irregularity, of the sort that is not generally met with in literary language:

And I saw (it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be...

For the sake of strictly grammatical speech one would have expected a repetition of "And I saw (tomb-stones where...)". As

it is, a noun ("tomb-stones") and a clause ("it was filled with graves") are made to stand close together, on terms of equality.

The childlike simplicity of Blake's utterance owes a great deal to the anaphora of *And... And... And*, particularly intense in the last stanza. The *and* betrays the influence of the Bible which Blake had studied with meticulous care, along with didactic, religious books like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). The sevenfold repetition of *and* lends to the poem something of the quiet grandeur of biblical eloquence. It also adds to the musicality of the poem, rendering it melodious and rhythmical. The rhythm of the poem is of the simplest type and is therefore perfectly attuned to the fresh simplicity and unpretentiousness of the whole. It is the ballad-measure with some such slight variations as the use of three stressed syllables throughout the whole of the stanza, instead of the more common alternation of four and three stressed syllables. From stanza to stanza there is a shift of the pattern, with a different stress scheme and with a varied total number of syllables. In the first stanza there are eight syllables with three stresses in every line, in the second — nine syllables and three stresses, while in both stanzas all the lines adopt one and the same rhythmical pattern, with the exception of the fourth. But in the last stanza no two lines are rhythmically identical, while the change in rhythm occurring after the second line provides a note of sheer horror, a note made all the more resonant by medial rhyme:

And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys and desires.

The first rhyme (*gowns — rounds*) sounds like the pounding tread of feet walking on and on, in tiresome rounds, the second (*briars — desires*) links things antithetical, natural desires and hard, prickly briars — and thus emphasizes their incompatibility.

The combination of monotony and variety within a very simple metrical scheme is in keeping with that combination of simple diction and complex feeling that is characteristic of Blake. The tragic complexity of Blake's world is rendered in contrasting symbols of flowers and briars, sweet flowers and black gowns. Love, play, green garden, flowers are opposed to the Chapel with shut doors (another symbolic detail) and with its imperative "Thou shalt not", to the graves, the briars and the priests in black gowns. The manner in which these symbolic details are joined by *and* sets off the contrast of life and death by revealing their close connection. Graves and tombs taking the place of joys and flowers — that is Blake's summary of his time.

In the simplest words, by mere presentation, in a series of contrasting pictures, without the least attempt at reasoning and philosophizing, Blake gives an insight into a philosophical problem of lasting importance.

THE FIRST BOOK OF URIZEN¹

(1794)

Plate 2²

Preludium to the First Book of Urizen

Of the primeval Priest's assumed power,
When Eternals³ spurn'd back his religion,
And gave him a place in the North,
Obscure, shadowy, void, solitary.

Eternals! I hear your call gladly.
Dictate swift winged words and fear not
To unfold your dark visions of torment.

Plate 3

CHAPTER I

1. Lo, a Shadow of horror is risen
In Eternity! unknown, unprolific,⁴
Self-clos'd,⁵ all-repelling. What Demon
Hath form'd this abominable Void,
This soul-shudd'ring Vacuum?⁶ Some said
It is Urizen. But unknown, abstracted,⁷
Brooding, secret, the dark Power hid.
2. Times on times he divided, and measur'd
Space by space in his ninefold darkness,⁸
Unseen, unknown; changes appear'd
Like desolate mountains, rifted⁹ furious
By the black winds of perturbation.
3. For he strove in battles dire,
In unseen confictions¹⁰ with Shapes,

¹ Urizen — a figure in the mythology created by Blake, symbol of the calculating reason and of tyranny. In the poet's later works his attitude to Urizen is less harsh: he is treated like a fallen angel and, ultimately, forgiven.

² Blake etched the text of his poems and the pictures illustrating them on copper-plates.

³ Eternals — eternal Gods

⁴ unprolific — spare, barren

⁵ self-closed — withdrawn, self-centred

⁶ soul-shuddering vacuum — an emptiness that makes your soul shudder

⁷ abstracted — Aere: absent-minded

⁸ ninefold darkness — the deepest darkness

⁹ rifted — torn asunder, split

¹⁰ confictions — conflicts

Bred from his forsaken wilderness,
Of beast, bird, fish, serpent, and element,
Combustion, blast, vapour, and cloud.

4. Dark, revolving in silent activity,
Unseen in tormenting passions,
An Activity unknown and horrible,
A self-contemplating Shadow,
In enormous labours occupied.
5. But Eternals beheld his vast forests;
Ago on ago he lay, clos'd, unknown,
Brooding, shut in the deep; all avoid
The petrific, ¹ abominable Chaos.
6. His cold horrors silent, dark Urizen
Prepar'd; his ten thousands of thunders,
Rang'd in gloom'd ² array, stretch out across
The dread world; and the rolling of wheels,
As of swelling seas, sound in his clouds,
In his hills of stor'd snows, in his mountains
Of hail and ice; voices of terror
Are heard, like thunders of autumn,
When the cloud blazes over the harvests.

COMMENTS

The First Book of Urizen belongs to the earliest of Blake's *Prophetic Books*. It is representative of Blake's grand style that owes a great deal to the influence of Milton. Blake also uses the blank verse but substitutes a very free metrical scheme with short uneven lines for Milton's regular five-foot iambics. Blake's line is made up of three amphibrachs, with or without a spare syllable at the end. It is so varied as to leave nothing fixed but the division of the line into three-beat units.

Blake imitates the famous beginning of *Paradise Lost*:

Of Man's First Disobedience and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal Taste
Brought Death into the World and all our woe
With loss of Eden...
Sing, Heav'nly Muse...

Blake begins in the same way, but omits the predicate. This adds to the rugged vigour of the opening lines. The subject of the poem are chaos, space, and the formidable powers dominating them.

¹ petrific — petrified

² gloom'd — gloomy

Terror, fear, darkness, desolation prevail in the sweeping pictures conjured by Blake. No ray of light comes to pierce this gloom. The poet speaks of torment, horror, of a void, a wilderness, of chaos. His epithets are *obscure, shadowy, void, solitary, dark, unknown, unprolific, abominable, desolate, black*. Some of the epithets are self-coined, powerful in their originality: *self-clos'd, all-repelling, self-contemplating, soul-shudd'ring* (the latter being somewhat ungrammatical, since *shudder* is here turned into a causative verb). A great role is played by negatives — *unknown, unseen, unknown* again and yet again. Urizen typifies human bondage. He is the "brooding, secret, the dark power" hid in the midst of abysses of horror ruling over them all.

The abysses and chasms of space are not only bleak and desolate, they are, moreover, the scene of strife, of "tormenting passions", of "activity unknown and horrible". This is Blake's conception of the strife and turmoil agitating the social and political life of his time. These are rendered by symbols concerned with the unruly, the stormy elements of nature herself: the mountains are "rifted furious / By the black winds of perturbation", Urizen "strove in battle dire, / In unseen confictions".

The powers of darkness "revolve in silent activity", in "tormenting passions", they are "occupied in enormous labours", and manifest themselves in combustions and "blasts". The reader is involved in gigantic processes, convulsing the visible world. The dynamic nature of this world is stressed by abundant participles characteristic of a changing universe: the wilderness is "forsaken", the passions "tormenting", even shadows are "self-contemplating" and in this way active.

Over this abysmal darkness the sinister figure of Urizen reigns supreme. Although Blake speaks of him as "silent", "brooding", "hidden", his activity is immense; he wields an array of thunders, he divides and measures space by space — the incongruous mathematical term "to divide something by something" emphasizing the bleak majesty of the mysterious proceedings. The grandeur is also supported by the powerful and unusual syntactical pattern of the poem. Blake has recourse to strong inversions that are eloquent of the atmosphere of turmoil and upheaval recreated by the poet. Thus:

In a shadow of horror is risen
In Eternity! Unknown, unprolific,
Self-clos'd, all-repelling: what Demon
Hath form'd this abominable void?

Apparently, the epithets refer to "horror", but the construction is ambiguous and might be interpreted as a characteristic of Eternity, which it obviously is not. As it stands, the attributes are separated from the noun they define. Another example of strikingly unusual syntax is afforded by the lines:

His cold horrors silent, dark Urizen
Prepared...

On a different occasion Blake begins a stanza and a sentence with a conjunction: "*For* he strove in battles dire", which is followed by an inversion that gives a violent wrench to the whole stanza, a wrench that eloquently conveys a world very much "out of joint":

For he strove in battles dire,
In unseen conflictions with shapes
Bred from his forsaken wilderness
Of beast, bird, fish, serpent and element,
Combustion, blast, vapour and cloud.

The almost complete breakdown of the metrical form enhances the disharmony, the discord of Urizen's universe. The illogical combination of beast, fish, combustion, blast renders the impression of chaos where all is mixed in a veritable phantasmagoria of horror. In Blake's poem all things are on the grandest scale: they live in eternity, in space, in cosmos; the poet has no eye for anything less imposing than mountains, seas, vast forests, clouds.

The hideous changes and cataclysms taking place in this world of darkness are expressed by clumsy, unheard-of words that seem to be born in a convulsive effort: *conflictions*, *petrific*, *gloom'd*, *ninefold* — these words look like concoctions of a mind staggered by horror and dismay.

If Blake is daring in the words he coins, he is still more so in his imagery which produces a shattering impact.

Some of these similes are extraordinary in the way they blend different aspects of things: thus "thunders" are supposed to stretch across the world (although thunder can have no dimension), and clouds blaze over the harvests in the place of lightning. Metaphors like "a shadow of horror risen in Eternity", or "desolate mountains, rifted furious / By the black winds of perturbation", long enumerations, heavy with epithets, hyperboles ("ten thousands of thunders", "mountains of hail and ice"), similes all derived from the elements, or from grand natural objects as, for instance, "voices of terror / Are heard, like thunders of autumn", "the rolling of wheels, / As of swelling seas, sound in his clouds", — all these go together to shape a truly cosmic panorama. It has a music of its own, created by repetitions of liquids and spirants:

Hang'd in gloom'd array, stretched out across
The dread world; and the rolling of wheels,
As of swelling seas, sound in his clouds,
In his hills of stor'd snow.

The repetition rolls like the thunders of which Blake speaks. These sounds reverberate in an enormous void. Blake introduces various synonyms to express the sense of that void and its

terrific size. For 'void' he uses *vacuum*, *chaos*, *world*, *wilderness*, and calls them *vast*, *enormous*. Certain key-words are effectively repeated to increase our sense of fear and doom. Among the most frequently repeated words are *shadowy* (twice), *shadow*, *void* (twice), *eternity* (three times), *dark* (five times), *torment* (twice), *horror* (twice), *unknown* (four times), *brooding* (twice), *power*, *abominable* (twice). They give an idea of an eternity of terror ruled by the all-powerful Urizen. The length of time is made clear by repetition: "Age on age he lay", "Times on times he divided and measured / Spaco by space". The use of the pronoun *his* (Urizen's) in connection with thunders, clouds, hills, mountains underlines his power over a gigantic world. In his portrayal of that world Blake is a forerunner of Byron in *Manfred* and *Cain* and of Shelley in *Queen Mab* and *Prometheus Unbound*.

The language of Blake is majestic and lofty. He gives up classicist abstractions and personifications for the sake of grand symbols incarnate in phantastic shapes and powers that his imagination renders material.

LONDON

(1794)

I wander thro' each charter'd¹ street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every black'ning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear,
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. Sum up the picture of London drawn by Blake. What features of the age does it typify?

¹ charter'd — here: privileged (Blake uses the word ironically)

2. How is Blake's humane outlook conveyed?
3. Whom does Blake look upon as the most tragic victims of London?
4. Which of Blake's tropes strike you most forcefully? Comment on them.
5. Discuss the symbols introduced by Blake.
6. Explain the last stanza of the poem.
7. What is the meaning of "mind-forg'd manacles"?
8. Compare the *London* of Blake to that of Johnson (in subject-matter, idea, execution). Discuss the difference in the literary principles of the two poets.
9. Dwell upon the metre of the poem.
10. Why does *London* belong to *Songs of Experience*?
11. Read *London* in the translation of S. Marshak. Do you find the Russian version adequate to the original? Substantiate your point of view.

THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER

(1801)

A little black thing among the snow,
Crying "weep! weep!" in notes of woe!
"Where are thy father and mother, say?"
"They are both gone up to the church to pray."

"Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil'd among the winter's snow,
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe."

"And because I am happy and dance and sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God and his Priest and King,
Who make up a heaven of our misery."

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. Interpret the meaning of the poem as you understand it.
2. Comment on the religious views revealed in this poem.
3. Compare these views with those voiced in *The Garden of Love*.
4. What is Blake's attitude to the restrictions and limiting forces of society?
5. Quote lines where natural objects are used symbolically.

6. Point out the words that are repeatedly used by Blake in this poem. Explain the reason why.

7. Note the contrasts in the poem and analyse their stylistic value.

8. What are the features of the ballad that Blake introduces into his lyric? Of what importance is the dialogue-form, the metre?

9. What is Blake's way of rendering the spontaneity of a child's speech?

10. Characterize the diction and the syntax of the poem.

11. How do you understand the line "Who make up a heaven of our misery?"

William Wordsworth

(Born 1770 — Died 1850)

The poets of the first generation of English romantics (Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey) began by being warm admirers of the French Revolution and Wordsworth even spent a few years in France to participate in the birth of a new world of freedom and equality. They were later bitterly disappointed in the aftermath of Revolution which, in their opinion, had brought but cruelty, bloodshed and, in the wake of these, a new tyranny. The poets lost their belief in social man but not in man as a moral being.

Wordsworth arrived at the conclusion that there was no other hope but to "build social upon personal liberty" and the safest way to do so was to withdraw from the crowded and corrupt life of the town into the quiet of the country and there cultivate kindness, simplicity and a sense of moral and esthetic beauty.

These, Wordsworth maintained, were being ruthlessly destroyed by the rising capitalist civilization. In his opinion country-folk were the only class of people who, unspoiled by a pernicious culture, had preserved sterling moral worth and religious feeling; they were free from the false logic of a rationalist philosophy that in Wordsworth's eyes had been disproved by the turmoil of the French revolution. He strove to demonstrate that their language, unaffected and colloquial, was the most appropriate language of poetry.

Though no longer a believer in social reform, Wordsworth remained, for at least ten years following the collapse of his revolutionary ideals, a believer in democracy, in the rights of man, particularly those of the labourers of rural England. It was in these ten years that his best work was done — the *Lyrical Ballads* (with Coleridge), the greater part of the *Prelude*, the *Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty* and others.

In one of the sonnets (1802) Wordsworth apostrophized the great revolutionary poet Milton:

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee; she is a fen
Of stagnant waters; altar, word, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea;
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

As late as 1803 Wordsworth was still reproaching his country:

If for Greece, Egypt, India, Africa,
Aught good were destined, thou wouldst step between...
Oh, grief! that earth's best hopes rest all with thee!

(England! the time is come...)

Defence of the common man, exaltation of the beauty and moral value of nature, grief at the sight of the misery brought on by the industrial revolution in town and country are the characteristics of Wordsworth's most enduring poetry.

In his conception of man versus society, of religion versus rationalism, of heart versus intellect, of nature versus civilization Wordsworth was a romantic.

As the poet himself said:

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

(Lines Written in Early Spring)

Closeness to Nature, according to Wordsworth, inevitably results in a wide and sympathetic fellow-feeling for humanity. It is to Nature that he owes

...that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened: — that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on... —
...The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite, a feeling and a love...

..That time is past,
 And all its aching joys are now no more,
 And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
 Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
 Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
 Abundant recompense. For I have learned
 To look on nature, not as in the hour
 Of thoughtless youth; but bearing oftentimes
 The still, sad music of humanity..

(Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey)

It was only when Wordsworth, by degrees, became more and more conservative in his social, moral and religious views, when he came to a compromise with reaction that his poetic powers ebbed gradually away.

THE SOLITARY REAPER

(Composed Nov. 1805; Published 1807)

Behold her, single in the field,
 Yon solitary Highland Lass!
 Reaping and singing by herself;
 Stop here, or gently pass!
 Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
 And sings a melancholy strain;
 O listen! for the Vale profound
 Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
 More welcome notes to weary bands
 Of travellers in some shady haunt,
 Among Arabian sands;
 A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
 In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
 Breaking the silence of the seas
 Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings? —
 Perhaps the plaintive numbers¹ flow
 For old, unhappy, far-off things,
 And battles long ago.
 Or is it some more humble lay,
 Familiar matter of to-day?
 Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
 That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
 As if her song could have no ending;

¹ numbers — here: verses

I saw her singing at her work,
 And o'er the sickle bending: —
 I listened, motionless and still;
 And, as I mounted up the hill,
 The music in my heart I bore,
 Long after it was heard no more.

COMMENTS

The poem is a recognized sample of Wordsworth's ability of getting a great deal out of the simplest subject. His well-known confession:

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.¹

is more than confirmed in this lyric. Its theme is a cottage girl, all alone, singing at her work. But the poet's attention is fixed on the thoughts that arise in him in connection with the girl's song rather than on the girl herself. It is the associations roused by a beautiful voice that form the core of the poem. The range of those associations is very wide: it sweeps over land and sea, over sand and water from South to North, from Arabia to the Hebrides, from vast continents to small out-of-the-way islands. The poet's thoughts drift as freely over time as over space, from "old, unhappy, far-off things" to "familiar matter of to-day". The last reflection brings the song of the solitary reaper into living contact with feelings that are ever human and, therefore, ever interesting. This is exactly what Wordsworth thought the poet's first duty. As "a man speaking to men", a poet links past, present and future, dwells on what "has been, and may be again".

After daring flights of fancy, touching upon those distant spheres that might be affected by the enchantment of song, Wordsworth comes back to the singer. But the analogies and associations her voice has conjured up transform a commonplace country girl, intent on commonplace work, into a truly poetic character: she who can call forth emotions of that nature must surely be above the ordinary. Wordsworth makes this clear by emphasizing her solitude. *The Solitary Reaper* is what he calls his poem, and in the first stanza the title is justified four times, each time by means of a new synonym (*single, solitary, by herself, alone*). Now, one who has it in her to abandon herself to song while she is alone and engaged in work notoriously hard, possesses the instinctive and disinterested love of beauty that is the hall-mark or truly endowed natures. We realize this, because Wordsworth lets us see what riches the unconscious singer pours out. So great are they that "the Vale profound / Is overflowing with the sound". The wealth of sound is

¹ In *1793: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*.

rendered in the metaphorical verb *overflow* (on another occasion — *flow*) and in the hyperbolic assertion that the girl's song could have no ending. The profusion is also reflected in the feelings of the chance listener: "motionless and still", he listens to the music, and in his mind hears it when it can no longer reach him.

The rich music of the reaper's melody is poetically expressed by abundant repetition of *sing* and *song* (see stanza 4: *sung — song — singing*), as well as of such sonorous consonants as n, m, especially in combinations like ng, nt, nd (see the first four lines of stanza 2, where different n-combinations occur 11 times in 18 words, or the whole of stanza 1 where they occur 18 times in 33 words). Out of the 32 lines of the poem there are only six lines where the n-group is used less than twice, and of these six lines three are based on an m-alliteration that has an analogous musical effect ("Or is it some more humble lay, / Familiar matter of to-day" and "The music in my ear I bore").

The difference between the melody of the Nightingale and the Cuckoo is also defined musically, the n-sound prevailing in the description of the first, the r-sound in the description of the latter, with only some echoes of the n. The close syntactic parallel between the lines winding up the two halves of the second stanza ("Among Arabian sands", "Among the farthest Hebrides") is underlined by delicate reiteration of consonant sounds: m — ng — r — b — d — s. The gradually increasing breadth of vowels in "old unhappy far-off things" ([ou] — [æ] — [a:]), and the unobtrusive r broadening the vowels and diphthongs in "The music in my ear I bore / Long after it was heard no more", also have the effect of increasing the volume of sound, so to speak, of expressing its richness and fullness.

These acquire a particular poignancy from the song being sad: Wordsworth calls it "melancholy", "plaintive", and suggests that it flows for "unhappy things", for "sorrow, loss or pain". A girl who pours out her heavy heart in music without leaving her work for a moment is, clearly, a personality, an embodiment of simple courage. Though the poet gives next to no details about the reaper as she is, it is the effect that she has on him, and the vivid pictures he draws while inspired by her voice, that bring out her worth, ethical and esthetic.

It is characteristic of the poet that worth cannot be dissociated in his mind from a humble station in life and industrious habits. Accordingly, the reaper is introduced in words of the utmost simplicity, well harmonizing with her person. There are very few of the loftier poetic words such as *behold*, *yon*, *solitary*, *strain*, *numbers*, *chaunt*, *haunt*, *lay*.

The rest belong to the language of every day: *reap*, *cut*, *bind*, *grain*, etc. But these humbler words of colloquial usage are raised to the level of poetry by their proximity to those sanctioned by

poetic tradition. To give but one example: Wordsworth introduces his heroine as a *lass* — a word of no literary value, in common use in Scottish dialect poetry — but by referring to her as a *maiden* towards the end of the poem he establishes the validity of a labouring girl's rights to belong to poetry, and the æsthetic equality of the rustic *lass* and the civilized *maiden*.

In the lyric under examination Wordsworth hardly lays himself open to reproaches so often made to him on account of prosiness. The phrase "mounted up the hill" is generally cited as the only exception.

The simplicity of diction is supported by simplicity and sparsity of imagery. "The vale... overflowing with the sound" is one of the most conspicuous examples; sounds (or "numbers") that "flow" belong to the metaphors that have passed into the language, but in Wordsworth's line this common metaphor acquires a new quality. The same holds true in connection with "breaks the silence". It is also a matter of almost universal usage, but in the context of "the silence of the sea" the stock metaphor of "broken silence" is renewed by a fresh one.

The beautiful associative pictures of the nightingale singing to travellers who are happy in a long-sought refuge from endless sands, and of the cuckoo, whose calls sound over the sea (a detail whose poetic value is infinitely superior to its informative value), are really similes, but they are not introduced in the traditional manner, for example, "the reaper's song is as welcome and as thrilling as...": they are given as analogies, suggested by the reaper's voice and built according to the laws of associations cultivated by the romantics.

The associations are at one and the same time concrete and yet poetically vague: what nightingale ever sings in Arabian sands, or, for that matter, what cuckoo can hope to make himself heard over the sea? The same can be said about the heroine of the piece. We learn a great many specific details, but the girl herself eludes us: who is she, what does she sing about? This we shall never know, and the poet only makes tantalizing guesses expressed by questions and suppositions ("Perhaps?").

The song of the reaper is adequately treated with the help of the ballad-measure, so often favoured by Wordsworth. It is, however, successfully varied to suit the mood of pensive sorrow. Each stanza consists of two ballad stanzas, the first with the usual rhyme system (*a b c b*), the second falling into two couplets (*d e d e*). All the lines of all the stanzas have eight syllables, with the exception of the fourth line which in three cases has six and in one case — seven syllables.

Variety is also enriched by frequent substitution as, for instance, the trochee in "reaping and singing by herself" and the spondee in "stop here or gently pass", both breaking through the prevalent iambic scheme.

The ballad-measure, with its variations, with its departures from classical metre (see the enjambment in the 2nd stanza: "weary bands / Of travellers") is well adapted to the simple colloquial intonation of the lyric. The direct and simple word-order is broken but four times: "the Vale profound" (instead of "the profound Vale"), "No Nightingale did ever chaunt" (instead of "no Nightingale ever chanted"), "A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard" (instead of "so thrilling a voice was never heard") and in the final "The Music in my ear I bore" (instead of "I bore the music in my ear"). The second and third instances are, however, typical of popular poetry and are not the product of literary influence.

Simplicity, variety and repetition are of primary importance as they render the impression of a song with its regular recurrence of theme and melody. The poem as it stands has all the freshness of immediate experience and is at the same time the exposition of Wordsworth's creed concerning the essence of all esthetic experience: it never fades, can never be obliterated, it lives in the mind of those who partake of it and imperceptibly influences their moral nature. That influence, Wordsworth held, is furthered by a well-balanced blend of thought and action, of simple fact and poetic association, of musical and pictorial imagery, of simplicity of feeling as well as of diction, and by the presentation of the subject in the fullness of the impact it has on the presumed speaker.

SONNET

(Composed ? Published 1807)

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
 Little we see in Nature that is ours;
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
 This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
 The winds that will be howling at all hours,
 And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
 For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
 It moves us not. — Great God! I'd rather be
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

COMMENTS

The sonnet is one of the famous specimens of Wordsworth's dignified manner. Sonnets were revived by the romantics after nearly two centuries of almost complete oblivion (exceptions, such

as, for instance, the sonnets of Milton being so rare as to be of no practical account). Wordsworth was an important figure in that revival. Pushkin is known to have mentioned Wordsworth as one who gave the sonnet its due. The strict form of the sonnet, with its invariable fourteen iambic lines and its definite rhyme-system, is in this case particularly graceful and symmetrical (*a b a b; b a b a; c d c; d c d*); the second quatrain of the octave reverses the rhyme-order of the first in exactly the same way as the second triplet of the sestet reverses that of the first. This gives the sonnet its peculiar finish, and a severity of form that accords well with the severe mood of the poet.

The sonnet, brief and regulated as it is by rule¹ and precedent, requires prodigious concentration of thought. Wordsworth proves equal to the demands of the sonnet. The main idea, a weighty and serious one, is enunciated in the opening line ("The world is too much with us"), and there is a new idea, or a new aspect of the idea, in almost every line.

The sonnet as a whole is the poet's reproof to his contemporaries and at the same time it is a deeply emotional lyrical utterance. That, in itself, is one of the striking achievements of romantic poetry, of its skill in presenting things of universal moment or appeal as though it were an intimate concern of the poet. Public emotions are transformed into private ones, which in their turn work on public feeling and stimulate its activity.

The central thesis voiced by Wordsworth is one that was at the back of his mind during the greater part of his creative period. The poet declares that the misfortune of modern men is that they are too wrapt up in material cares, in gain, profit and money-making, and lose the capacity of simple enjoyment of domestic happiness, of love of Nature and beauty. Even paganism seems an enviable state, because the pagans (the Greeks) were closer to Nature and thought of it as inhabited by men-like deities.

Paradoxically, it is in an apostrophe to God, the God of Christian monotheism, that Wordsworth makes this declaration. Coming from a religious man it has a strong and even violent ring, being a manifestation of the poet's despairing scorn of drab modernity and the official creed that cannot awaken men to a sense of their oneness with Nature.

The language of the sonnet harmonizes with its ideas. It is simple and yet elevated, to suit the purpose of a man with a message to his fellow-countrymen. There are, actually, hardly any words that belong to poetic diction proper. Clarity and depth of thought

¹ The Petrarchan sonnet to which Wordsworth has recourse implied a definite structure composed of an octave and a sestet expressing successive phases of one thought. The poet was only free to vary the rhyme-scheme (*a b a b; a b a b; c d c; c d c* or: *a b b a; a b b a; c d c; c d c*, etc.). Wordsworth, as has been demonstrated, chose another of the possible variations.

are at one with the vividness and imaginative vigour of the imagery. There is more significance in it than meets the eye. The opening statement, for example, seems merely literal ("The world is too much with us"), but is really a metaphor worded with noble simplicity, for by "the world" Wordsworth means the outward trappings of life, its vanities and degrading cares. So is the assertion "we lay waste our powers", for "lay waste" implies not physical but moral destruction. In the fourth line the hackneyed metaphor "to give one's heart away" (to fall in love) is used in an entirely different sense; for, according to Wordsworth, men have voluntarily deprived themselves of their own hearts—"a sordid boon". The oxymoron linking "sordid" to "boon" is very striking in its union of opposites.

The bold and grand personification of the sea, enriched by a metaphor ("This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon"), the somewhat artificial simile of winds "up-gathered now like sleeping flowers" are impressive as imaginative statements of the modern man's losses. In the same way the line "For this, for everything, we are out of tune" is characteristic of Wordsworth's ability of making even a trite metaphor serve his ends, by giving it a fresh figurative meaning.

If an abstraction like "Nature" does occur it is in company with the perfectly simple "that is ours"—while "creed" goes together with the homely "outworn" and "suckled", here used metaphorically, thus losing its abstract characteristics.

Classical allusions, which as a rule are also general, are less so in this poem. Instead of being parts of conventional periphrases, Proteus and Triton are embodiments of primitive religiosity, of a naïve deification of Nature's beauties. The Gods of ancient Greece are appealed to only as a proof of Wordsworth's disgust with the prosiness of modern Englishmen who fall far short of that enthusiasm for natural phenomena which found an outlet in the beautiful naïveté of Greek mythology. Yet the appeal is happy in its plastic expressiveness and natural concreteness: Proteus and Triton, as deities of the sea, are appropriate, for Wordsworth accused his contemporaries precisely of indifference to the grandeur of the sea.

The transition from general reflections (in the octave) to the personal note in the sestet is very fine, for it is justified by the climactic upsurge of emotion culminating in the exclamation "Great God!" The break in the middle of the line ("It moves us not. — Great God! I'd rather be ? A Pagan...") contributes to the effect the sonnet gives of the rhythm of colloquial speech as distinct from the rhythmical regularity of completed lines. This quiet, meditative intonation is also created by the broken line in the first stanza, by frequent substitution (see lines 2, 3, 4), by the dignified simplicity of diction, strengthened by the long, decasyllabic lines of the sonnet.

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye
— Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. What in your opinion are the most obvious peculiarities of this poem? What is the impression it produces?

2. Analyse the syntax of the poem. Is it simple or elaborate? Does direct word-order prevail? Are there any inversions?

3. Point out the departure from common syntactic structure in the second stanza. What part of the sentence is omitted, and why?

4. Dwell on the similes introduced by the poet (second stanza). Are they new, original, striking? What makes them expressive?

5. What is the one characteristic of Lucy that the poet particularly emphasizes? Why? How does it agree with Wordsworth's ideas on the proper subjects of poetry?

6. Comment upon the epithet *untrodden* ("untrodden ways"). Why is it important?

7. What effect does the reiteration of *know* in the last stanza produce?

8. Explain the function of the periphrase in the line "Lucy ceased to be". How does it differ from periphrase as applied in classical poetry?

9. Give a syntactic definition of the closing line of the poem: "oh, / The difference to me!" Is this line colloquial or elevated? Characterize the function of enjambment as used by Wordsworth.

10. Characterize the diction of the poem. Are there any abstract nouns? Are there any words to be met with only in poetry?

THE PRELUDE, BOOK XI

The French Revolution, as It Appeared to Enthusiasts at Its Commencement

(Composed 1804; Published 1809)

Oh! pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, we who were strong in love!
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven! — Oh! times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
When most intent on making of herself
A prime Enchantress — to assist the work
Which then was going forward in her name!
Not favoured spots alone, but the whole earth
The beauty wore of promise — that which sets
(As at some moment might not be unfelt
Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
The budding rose above the rose full blown.
What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
The playfellows of fancy, who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
Their ministers, — who in lordly wise had stirred
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And dealt with whatsoever they found there
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it; — they, too, who, of gentle mood,
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
And in the region of their peaceful selves; —
Now was it that *both* found, the meek and lofty
Did both find, helpers to their heart's desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish;
Were called upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us — the place where, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all!

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. How does Wordsworth describe the impact of the Revolution upon his contemporaries? Comment on the poet's political views.
2. How does he contrast the state of things before the Revolution and after? Interpret the lines

... Oh! times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!

3. What, according to Wordsworth, were the principal features of the Revolution as it struck its observers? How does Wordsworth differentiate these observers?

4. By what stylistic means is the poet's attitude to the Revolution expressed? Name the key-words of the poem. Which of them are repeated and why?

5. Discuss the metre of the poem — the measure, the length of line.

6. Analyse the periods composing the poem, their length and structure. Point out the exclamatory and interrogative sentences. How do they interact with the longer periods? What colouring do they give the poem?

7. Can the language of the poem be termed dignified, stately? Give your reasons.

8. Analyse the diction of the poem. Is it abstract or concrete? Which words prevail, Germanic or Romanic ones?

9. Is the intonation of the poem that of the spoken language or is it strictly defined by rhythm and melody?

10. What metaphors are important in the text?
-

In the well-known declaration concerning the nature of his collaboration with Wordsworth in their joint venture of the *Lyrical Ballads* Coleridge stated: "The thought suggested itself — (to which of us I do not recollect) — that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real... For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity. It was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; and so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith."

In Coleridge's poetry the mystical and supernatural are not merely a means of stylization or a tribute to folk-lore. In his case they are indeed fundamental and play a complex role.

The streak of mysticism in Coleridge's art springs from his disillusionment with the materialist and rationalist doctrine that inspired the French Revolution, which, he asserted, had proved the inefficiency of all political change. That disillusionment, along with feverish attempts to find a way of improving mankind within the framework of a reactionary society, urged him to work out an all-embracing metaphysical system in support of conservatism and religion. This, in the long run, proved detrimental to Coleridge's poetic abilities.

Coleridge left behind a comparatively small body of work. Of his critical compositions the most important are *Biographia*

Literaria (1817) and the rather fragmentary *Lectures on Shakespeare* (1806—1818). His poetical masterpieces are few. Among them *The Ancient Mariner*, *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel* rank highest. Only the first of these was completed.

When a young man, the mariner killed "a bird of good omen", an albatross that had brought luck to their ship. For this crime against Nature and God the mariner and his mates who approved of his action suffered unutterable hardships at sea. He alone survived, spared, as it were, to endure all the more from pangs of remorse. It is only when love of all living things finds its way into his obdurate heart that he is saved and forgiven. But, since then, from time to time the mariner has an irresistible longing to tell his "ghastly tale". On the present occasion he inflicts it upon an unwilling listener who is in a hurry to attend a wedding-feast. And yet, the old man "holds him with his glittering eye".

THE ANCIENT MARINER

(1798)

Part I

The Wedding-Guest
heareth the bridal music;
but the Mariner
continueth his tale.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The ship driven by a
storm toward the south
pole.

"And now the storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward ay we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:

And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal shreen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken¹ —
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around;
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!²

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;³
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moon-shine."

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus! —
Why look'st thou so?" — "With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross!"

[The following extract narrates the distress that fell to the lot of the luckless crew after the albatross was shot.]

Part II

The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,

The land of ice, and of
fearful sounds where no
living thing was to be
seen.

Till a great sea-bird,
called the Albatross,
came through the
snow-fog, and was
received with great joy
and hospitality.

And lo! the Albatross
proveth a bird of good
omen, and followeth the
ship as it returned
northward through fog
and floating ice.

The ancient Mariner
inhospitably killeth the
pious bird of good omen.

¹ ken — know

² swound — swoon (arch.)

³ for vespers nine — for nine evenings

Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollol

His shipmates cry out
against the ancient
Mariner, for killing the
bird of good luck.

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

But when the fog cleared
off, they justify the
same, and thus make
themselves accomplices
in the crime.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze
continues; the ship
enters the Pacific Ocean,
and sails northward,
even till it reaches the
Line. The ship hath been
suddenly becalmed.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be,
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

And the Albatross begins
to be avenged.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea,

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

And some in dreams assured were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well a-day! what evil look
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

The shipmates, in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner: in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.

COMMENTS

The above excerpts form one of the most exciting parts of the Mariner's terrible *Odyssey*. Coleridge contributed this tale to the collection of *Lyrical Ballads*. Applied to *The Ancient Mariner* this term meant that the poem in question was not just a minor epic, or an epic on a small scale, as ballads normally should be, but also the history of a soul, in this case a soul in pain, in mortal agony. This is the essential difference between Coleridge's ballads and the ballads of tradition where the inner life of the characters is only touched upon in so far as it happens to affect the story. Contrary to the received notion of a ballad as a piece of objective narration, Coleridge's "lyrical ballad" was a peculiar romantic innovation.

In the above quoted second part of the poem the Mariner does not dwell much upon his feelings. In the other six parts the lyrical element is stronger. But even here every word of the description is heavy with nameless horror and regret, with intense personal feeling, as distinct from the subdued quiet of an impassive narrator. Coleridge does not strive mainly for picturesque effects to set off the passions of the characters and the ghastly quality of the story.

His descriptions are invariably the reflection of extreme personal sensitiveness to evil and its consequences. The fantastic parts of the poem, the incredible and the supernatural, cannot be dismissed as a tribute to the superstitious world of the ballad, nor can they be rationally interpreted. They are also the outcome of the workings of a sensitive mind, diseased and unbalanced by remorse.

The Albatross, obviously, is a symbol of all that is good, fair, trusting and kind in Nature while wanton destruction of it, proceeding from no better reason than an outbreak of sheer cruelty that astounds the guilty man himself — is a symbol of that evil, which, according to Coleridge, lurks at the back of modern life.

These philosophical undercurrents are of first-rate importance if we are to understand the poem, and go very far to explain the peculiarities of a romantic ballad. It is to these conceptions that the imagery of the poem is subservient. The sense of some great unknown underlying the visible world and all its happenings, the belief that the least unkindness, be it only to a bird, is a punishable offence against Nature, determines the grandness and the symbolic character of the imagery associated with Nature. The sun, according to Coleridge, is glorious, "like God's own head", and a little later when the Mariner's punishment begins, the same sun is "bloody", an ominous epithet rich in obvious connotations. The helplessness and the painful immobility of the seamen are wonderfully rendered by the simile

As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

The stricken ship loses all reality, she is arrested in a sort of deadly lethargy and seems but a picture of herself. At the same time, all things around her acquire a startling physical reality, so as to be almost tangible. The metaphorical epithet of "copper sky" conveys at once the colour and the heat emanated by the sky; the simile of water burning "like a witch's oils" (the verb *burn* used metaphorically in connection with the interplay of colours) makes the horrors experienced by the seamen terribly real and palpable. The same effect is attained by the simile likening the feel of a parched throat to being choked with root, and also by the metaphorical verb denoting the withering of the tongue.

In the text under examination tropes of the usual kind — i.e. words and phrases used in obviously figurative meanings — are comparatively few. More often words have literal meanings, but at the same time they also possess a symbolic value. Thus, for example, when Coleridge mentions the land of "mist and snow" from which the Spirit of Evil followed the ship, the words convey a direct meaning, for mists and snows really were a feature of that land, but in juxtaposition with the copper sky and the bloody sun they symbolize the contrasts of pain inflicted on the sailors, the contrasts

of extreme heat and extreme cold, the extremes meeting only in their agonizing effect.

The same is true of the stanza

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

There are no tropes here, but the drought is a symbol of supreme torture, no less moral than physical and made worse by the grim irony of a situation where abundance and want go together. The same can be said about the hair-raising description of the rotting sea. The words are used literally but they are symbolic of universal evil and disintegration, just as the Albatross is a symbol of the universal goodness of Nature. The utmost concreteness of presentation emphasizes the abstract character of the symbols.

These palpably real details of the shrinking boards or the slimy things crawling with legs on the slimy sea belong to the world of fancy and have an unprecedented distinctness. Every stanza is a new picture, the 1st and 2nd stanza of Part II having parallels in the beginning of the poem. The stanza about the gradual rise of the sun is only slightly altered from the 6th stanza of Part I:

Part I

The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Part II

The sun now rose upon the right;
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

The parallel construction enhances the contrast, and the contrast sets off the strict parallelism of the whole structure.¹

The sun hanging right over the ship, sometimes almost seeming to touch it ("right up above the mast"), the rotting sea where "slimy things did crawl with legs" are fine instances of the nature of Coleridge's penetration into the world of fantasy, of the physical reality of the creations of his imagination.

The story is put into the mouth of a common sailor, a man of older, more primitive times who is not used to sophisticated ways of thinking. He tells things as he sees them, and he sees them in their living entity. His naively circumstantial description of the motions of the sun ("Out of the sea came he", "Right up above the mast did

¹ Compare also:

Part I

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

Part II

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!

and its marked alliteration. The latter has a wide application in the poem, as it brings in music according well both with the imagery of the poem and with its dominant moral theme. The persistency of the theme is enforced by repetition (as, for example, "Into that silent sea" followed by "The silence of the sea" in the next stanza), by variety of alliterations, initial and medial, sonorously falling on stressed syllables (as in "Water, water, everywhere" or "The very deep did rot"), by recurrent medial rhymes, by concord of sound and image and rhythm, as in the light and graceful movement of the lines:

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night..

The music, the colouring ("green, and blue and white"), the rhythmical variety, the subtle renewal, in ever fresh combinations, of sounds, words and phrases, their harmony with the plastic imagery and with the colloquialisms of the simple-minded speaker give a fearful reality to a symbolic tale. This makes *The Ancient Mariner* a fine instance of the romantic syncreticism of melody, idea, emotion and pictorial effect. Just what the magic of poetry in Coleridge's case is, becomes clear from comparing his stanzas with his own marginal prose comments. The archaic touches are there too, but they have nothing of the imaginative transformation of reality that is typical of the romantic approach to art.

CHRISTABEL

(Composed about 1800; Published 1816)

Part I

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;
Tu — wh! — Tu — whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.¹

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
From her kennel beneath the rock
She maketh answer to the clock,
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.

¹ crew = crowed (obs.)

The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray:
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,¹
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreamed all yesternight
Of her own betrothed knight;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak,
But moss and rarest mistletoe;
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel!
It moaned as near, as near can be,
But what it is, she cannot tell. —
On the other side it seems to be,
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek —
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!

¹ What makes her in the wood so late...? — What induces her to go to the wood so late?

She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made that white robe wan,
Her stately neck and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair.
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she —
Beautiful exceedingly!

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. Render the impression suggested by the extract under examination.
 2. Does Coleridge succeed in creating an atmosphere of mystery?
 3. Name the most important elements in Coleridge's picture of the night. Are they concrete or abstract?
 4. What are the most memorable features in the description of the unknown lady? Is her beauty expressed in tangible terms?
 5. Does Coleridge content himself with rendering visual impressions, or does he convey auditory impressions as well?
 6. Notice the references to the owl, the cock, the dog. Do they add to the weird atmosphere of the poem?
 7. Does Coleridge use elaborate, dignified language? Note examples of colloquialisms in the extract quoted above.
 8. What is the function of rhetorical questions used in the poem?
 9. What is the metre of the poem? Point out Coleridge's various departures from the metrical scheme of the ballad.
 10. Cite instances of Coleridge's use of substitution.
 11. Quote lines containing the words that Coleridge repeatedly uses. What is the nature of these words?
 12. Expand upon the imagery of the poem.
 13. In what way does Coleridge harmonize sound and image in the stanza about the dancing leaf?
-

Walter Scott

(Born 1771 — Died 1832)

The poetical activity of the famous novelist¹ belongs to the earlier period of his literary career. After some translations from the German Scott published two volumes of old Scottish balladry that he had zealously collected for a number of years. That was *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802). A year later he added a third volume of imitations of old ballads written by himself and other less known authors. Scott explained that these imitations were "founded upon such traditions as we may suppose in the elder times would have employed the harp of the minstrels". Of this class of ballads *The Eve of St. John* has been the most popular and is familiar to the Russian reader in the splendid translation of Zhukovsky. Scott called this ballad a legendary one — i. e. one that "does not relate events which we either know actually to have taken place or which, at least, making due allowance for the exaggerations of poetical tradition, we may readily conceive to have had some foundation in history". It is, nevertheless, rooted in the history of Scotland, as it alludes to the age-long feud between England and Scotland and cites the names of the Scottish nobles who distinguished themselves in this feud. On the Scottish side the poet mentions Douglas (Archibald Douglas) and an ancestor of his own, Buccleuch (the writer's full title was Sir Walter Scott of Buccleuch); on the English side — Lord Evers. This places the action of the ballad in the 16th century.

After the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* Scott wrote some original poems that enjoyed a tremendous success with his contemporaries (*The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, 1805; *Marmion*, 1808; *The Lady of the Lake*, 1810, etc.). But they are not much read now-

¹ See introductory note to Walter Scott in *Three Centuries of English Prose*, Leningrad, 1967.

days: as narratives they were superseded by Scott's novels, and their descriptive and lyrical passages were surpassed by the poetry of the younger romantics — Byron, Shelley, Keats. It is his old ballads and the occasional shorter pieces of poetry appearing in his novels that still retain their attraction for the general reader.

THE EVE OF ST. JOHN¹

(1802)

The Baron of Smaylho'me rose with day,
He spurr'd his courser on,
Without stop or stay, down the rocky way,
That leads to Brotherstone.²

He went not with the bold Buccleuch,
His banner broad to rear;
He went not 'gainst the English yew³
To lift the Scottish spear.

Yet his plate-jack⁴ was braced, and his helmet was laced,
And his vaunt-brace⁵ of proof he wore;
At his saddle-gerthe⁶ was a good steel sperthe,⁷
Full ten pound weight and more.

The Baron return'd in three days' space,
And his looks were sad and sour;
And weary was his courser's pace,
As he reach'd his rocky tower.

He came not from where Ancram Moor⁸
Ran red with English blood;
Where the Douglas true and the bold Buccleuch
'Gainst keen Lord Evers stood.

Yet was his helmet hack'd and hew'd,
His acton⁹ pierced and tore,

¹ St. John — the day of Saint John (December 27)

² Brotherstone — the beath of Brotherstone

³ the English yew — *here*: the Englishmen's bows (the wood of the yew tree was good for bows)

⁴ plate-jack — protective armour made of steel plates

⁵ vaunt-brace — breast plate

⁶ saddle-gerthe — a band passing round the body of the horse to hold the saddle in place

⁷ sperthe — battle-axe

⁸ Ancram Moor — a Scottish village, the scene of a battle in 1545 in which the English were defeated by the Scots; also a river of the same name

⁹ acton — a leather jacket worn under a coat of mail

His axo and his dagger with blood imbrued, —
But it was not English gore.

He lighted at the Chapellage,¹
He held him close and still;
And he whistled thrice for his little foot-page,
His name was English Will.

"Come thou hither, my little foot-page,
Come hither to my knee;
Though thou art young, and tender of age,
I think thou art true to me.

"Come, tell me all that thou hast seen,
And look thou tell me true!
Since I from Smaylho'me tower have been,
What did thy lady do?"

"My lady each night sought the lonely light,
That burns on the wild Watchfold;
For, from height to height, the beacons bright
Of the English foemen told.

"The bittern clamour'd from the moss,
The wind blew loud and shrill,
Yet the craggy pathway she did cross
To the eiry² Beacon Hill.³

"I watch'd her steps, and silent came
Where she sat her on a stone;
No watchman stood by the dreary flame,
It burn'd all alone.

"The second night I kept her in sight
Till to the fire she came,
And, by Mary's might! an armed Knight
Stood by the lonely flame.

"And many a word that warlike lord
Did speak to my lady there;
But the rain fell fast, and loud blew the blast,
And I heard not what they were.

¹ chapellage — chapel

² eiry (eery) — exciting fear

³ beacon hill — a hill where fires were lit to signal to the Scots that the English had invaded their land

And the mountain blast was seen,
As again I watch'd the secret pair
On the lonesome Beacon Hill.

"And I heard her name the midnight hour,
And name this holy eve,
And say, 'Come this night to thy lady's bower;
Ask no bold Baron's leave.

"He lifts his spear with the bold Buclidean;
His lady is all alone;
The door she'll undo to her knight so true
On the eve of good St. John.'"

"I cannot come; I must not come,
I dare not come to thee;
On the eve of St. John I must wander alone,
In thy bower I may not be."

"Now, out on thee, faint-hearted knight!
Thou shouldst not say me nay;
For the eve is sweet, and when lovers meet
Is worth the whole summer's day.

"And I'll chain the blood-bound, and the warder shall not
sound,
And rushes shall be strew'd on the stair;
So, by the black rood-stone, and by holy St. John,
I conjure thee, my love, to be there!"

"Though the blood-hound be mute, and the rush beneath my
foot,
And the warder his bugle should not blow,
Yet there sleepeth a priest in the chamber to the east,
And my footstep he would know."

"O fear not the priest, who sleepeth to the east,
For to Dryburgh¹ the way he has ta'en;
And there to say mass, till three days do pass,
For the soul of a knight that is slain.

"He turn'd him around, and grimly he frown'd,
Then he laugh'd right scornfully —
'He who says the mass-rite for the soul of that knight
May as well say mass for me.

¹ Dryburgh — an old monastery in Scotland

"'At the lone midnight hour, when bad spirits have power,
In thy chamber will I be.'

With that he was gone, and my lady left alone,
And no more did I see."

Then changed, I trow, was that bold Baron's brow,
From the dark to the blood-red high —

"Now tell me the men of the knight thou hast seen,
For, by Mary, he shall die!"

"His arms shone full bright in the beacon's red light;
His plume it was scarlet and blue;

On his shield was a hound, in a silver leash bound,
And his crest was a branch of the yew."

"Thou liest, thou liest, thou little foot-page,
Loud dost thou lie to me!

For that knight is cold, and low laid in the mould,
All under the Eildon-tree."¹

"Yet hear but my word, my noble lord!
For I heard her name his name;

And that lady bright, she called the knight
Sir Richard of Coldingham."

The bold Baron's brow then changed, I trow,
From high blood-red to pale —

"The grave is deep and dark, and the corpse is stiff and stark,
So I may not trust thy tale.

"Where fair Tweed flows round holy Melrose,²
And Eildon slopes to the plain,

Full three nights ago, by some secret foe,
That gay gallant was slain.

"The varying light deceived thy sight,
And the wild winds drown'd the name;

For the Dryburgh bells ring and the white monks do sing,
For Sir Richard of Coldingham!"

He pass'd the court-gate, and he oped the tower-grate,
And he mounted the narrow stair

¹ the Eildon-tree — a tree on the top of Eildon Hill, where the legendary poet Thomas the Rhymer uttered his prophecy

² Melrose — an abbey in Scotland

To the bartizan¹—at, ' where, with maids that on her wait,
He found his lady fair.

That lady sat in mournful mood,
Look'd over hill and vale,
Over Tweed's fair flood and Mertoun's wood
And all down Teviotdale.²

"Now hail, now hail, thou lady bright!"
"Now hail, thou Baron true!
What news, what news from Ancram fight?
What news from the bold Buccleuch?"

"The Ancram Moor is red with gore,
For many a southron fell;
And Buccleuch has charged us evermore
To watch our beacons well!"

The lady blush'd red, but nothing she said;
Nor added the Baron a word:
Then she stepp'd down the stair to her chamber fair,
And so did her moody lord.

In sleep the lady mourn'd, and the Baron toss'd and turn'd,
And oft to himself he said,
"The worms around him creep, and his bloody grave is deep —
It cannot give up the dead!"

It was near the ringing of matin-bell,³
The night was well nigh done,
When a heavy sleep on that Baron fell,
On the eve of good St. John.

The lady look'd through the chamber fair,
By the light of a dying flame;
And she was aware of a knight stood there —
Sir Richard of Coldingham!

"Alas! away, away!" she cried,
"For the holy Virgin's sake!"
"Lady, I know who sleeps by thy side;
But, lady, he will not awake.

¹ bartizan — a small overhanging turret projecting from an angle on the top of a tower

² Teviotdale — the valley of the river Teviot

³ the matin-bell — the bell rung for early prayer in Catholic churches

"By Eildon-tree, for long nights three,
 In bloody grave have I lain;
 The mass and the death-prayer are said for me,
 But, lady, they are said in vain.

"By the Baron's brand, near Tweed's fair strand,
 Most foully slain I fell;
 And my restless sprite on the beacon's height,
 For a space is doom'd to dwell.

"At our trysting-place, for a certain space,
 I must wander to and fro;
 But I had not had power to come to thy bower
 Had'st thou not conjured me so."

Love master'd fear; her brow she cross'd —
 "How, Richard, hast thou sped?
 And art thou saved, or art thou lost?"
 The vision shook his head!

"Who spilleth life shall forfeit life;
 So bid thy lord believe;
 That lawless love is guilt above,
 This awful sign receive."

He laid his left palm on an oaken beam,
 His right upon her hand —
 The lady shrunk, and fainting sunk,
 For it scorch'd like a fiery brand.

The sable scoto of fingers four
 Remains on that board impress'd;
 And for evermore that lady wore
 A covering on her wrist.

There is a nun in Dryburgh bower,
 Ne'er looks upon the sun;
 There is a monk in Melrose tower,
 He speaketh word to none;

That nun who ne'er beholds the day,
 That monk who speaks to none —
 That nun was Smaylho me's Lady gay,
 That monk the bold Baron.

COMMENTS

The Eve of St. John is an imitation but it is the work of a poet who is steeped in Scottish lore, who from his earliest childhood set down all the songs, ballads and legends that he ever heard told,

sung or recited. All the elements of a medieval ballad are there with a vengeance. Nevertheless an imitation it is, and is therefore a stylization made by a man belonging to a later and more refined culture. The ballad is written in a style that differs from that used in Scott's original poetry. The atmosphere is medieval, with all the traditional attributes of old feudal times, such as castles, chambers, pages, maids, chapels, priests, the Mass, knights, plumes, beacons, towers, warders, blood-hounds, crests, shields, etc. The poet's sense of history is plain even in the midst of his gruesome fantasies.

As a learned antiquarian, Scott was pedantic about details. If he mentions the Baron's outfit, every part of it is sure to be strictly historical. Though the subject of the ballad is legendary the background of the characters' tragedy is historical, even if rather indefinite. We learn that the Baron fights Scotland's battle against the English, and so does his unfortunate rival. The psychology of the ballad is also medieval. Not only is the love of a woman for anyone who does not happen to be her husband considered criminal, adulterous love: it is to be castigated, in heaven even more severely than on earth. In the Middle Ages nothing short of eternal doom could satisfy outraged moral feeling. Accordingly a man whose wife loves another man is in his own and in everybody else's eyes dishonoured and can only restore that honour by killing his rival. In doing so, however, he enters into a conflict with the Church. There seems to be no way out of this impasse but to murder the man and withdraw into a monastery to pray for one's own (and the victim's) soul, to the end of one's natural life. This is exactly what the Baron of Smaylho'me does, and Scott who is here in the capacity of imitator does not appear to worry about the contradictions between the feudal and the Christian code.

The cruel war between two countries, the bloody battle fought by two men, revenge, death and remorse, fear of eternal judgment hereafter give the ballad a bleak and gruesome colouring. Never once is the gloom relieved, and a sense of horror and doom pervades the whole. There is a presentiment of evil to come in the beginning of the ballad and a realization of the evil that has come in the end. Scott knows well how to recreate that feeling of suspense and vague fear that old ballads were justly remarkable for. The poet has a story to tell and he tells it well, modelling it on his study of the Scottish ballad.

Scott keeps to the main rule of the genre — to begin *in medias res*, to introduce plenty of action described with minute particulars, to give little room to analysis of the characters' feelings and to reveal their final fate only with the concluding words of the story.

The structure of the ballad is far from simple. The narrative moves forward and backward at will. We first hear of the Baron's departure (1st stanza) and then the mysterious nature of his errand is announced in negative statements (2nd stanza):

He went not with the bold Burdeuch...

He went not 'gainst the English yew...

The negative statements are followed by positive ones concerning the Baron's warlike appearance that seem to contradict the previous negations.

The same order is preserved in the next three stanzas:

The Baron returned... (4th stanza)

He came not from where Ancram Moor... (5th stanza)

Yet was his helmet hack'd and how'd... (6th stanza)

That sort of parallel structure is typical of folk-lore, with its love of repetition and parallel.

This is followed by the Baron's dialogue with his foot-page. Dialogue is also typical of balladry and is the simplest and most straightforward form of dramatization. The Baron's questions are followed by the page's most circumstantial narrative. After the custom of popular tales, it goes through the same ground three times differently, the third time being a kind of culmination. The page's answers take the narrative back — to the things that happened in the Baron's absence — and contain an account of a dialogue that the boy overheard. The dialogue again falls into three parts — three urgent summons on the lady's part and the knight's reluctant answers. The conversation between the Baron and the page goes on, also divided into three groups of statements and negations. Then the narrative gathers speed and after a brief dialogue between husband and wife reaches the culminating scene — the apparition of the murdered lover. Once again the story retraces its steps to recall the circumstances of the crime, circumstances that had been broadly hinted at but not revealed to the end — and marches to its hair-raising finale. The story of the lover's death is therefore repeated twice, by murderer and victim. The ultimate doom of the heroes does not transpire before the last lines of the ballad.

The interplay of past and present, of dialogue and narrative, of description and action gives the ballad an intricate movement in full accord with ballad tradition. Tragic passions, love that is stronger by far than fear of death and of hell-fire, hatred and jealousy rousing men to desperate deeds, a strong dose of mysticism, including ghosts with burning-hot hands, are all in the spirit of the ballad. So are the blood-curdling details supplied by Scott. He says: "The worms around him creep, and his bloody grave is deep..." Scott's descriptive manner essentially differs from Coleridge's. The author of the *Ancient Mariner* had written:

And slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon a slimy sea.

The small detail of legs invokes a picture that is truly horrific in its tangibility. It is more particularized than Scott's. But at the same time Coleridge gives reality to fantastic things, while Scott speaks of things that have (or had) a real existence. Whatever he says must be consistent with historical truth.

The historical background of the ballad is brought out in a variety of ways. Scott lovingly utters the names of places — castles, monasteries, rivers, mountains, and they all give that *couleur locale* so cherished by romantics. Besides, religious and feudal customs and rites play a considerable role in the picture: we hear of monks that say mass, of priests, of *matin-bells*, and, on the other hand, of the war that the Scots fight for their independence.

The historical colouring is also dependent on literary associations, on the closeness of *St. John* to medieval ballads. To give but one example: the mistress encouraging the timid lover to brave all obstacles and be making new excuses have a folk-lore origin. In the context of Scott's poem this *motif* acquires a slightly archaic ring, which strengthens the sense of antiquity the author was striving for. Scott comes much closer to the atmosphere of old balladry than Coleridge ever does.

Scott lingers on the description of rocky towers, craggy pathways, lonely lights, shrill winds, bright and lonesome beacons, lonely flames, loud blasts, the lone midnight, the clamouring bittern. The gusts of wind, the burning fires — signals of approaching danger, the time of night all expressed in the simplest words, common in popular songs and tales, — these details are instrumental in creating an expectation of uncanny and terrible doings.

The landscape, austere, bleak and romantically picturesque, is on every occasion in harmony with the headlong passions of the personages. Winds, rocks, lonely paths are real and indispensable parts of a landscape in the hills but they are also traditional attributes of a great many Scottish ballads and at the same time they run parallel to and are expressive of the rude customs and emotions of the heroes themselves.

The gradual unfolding of the mystery keeps the reader in suspense, while the punishment, both earthly and divine, that the three characters meet with is supposed to be a warning to all such wrong-doers.

Mystical and supernatural phenomena are treated in a matter-of-fact and realistic way.

Scott is a master of the pictorial detail, of little touches that sink into the mind of the reader. The vision, aerial though it is, leaves a dark imprint of four fingers on the oaken board and another on the arm of the lady. The exact definition of material ("oaken") and of the number of the fingers give a sinister reality to the poet's fantasy, to his presentation of medieval notions. That presentation

has an authentic ring since the diction of the ballad is adroitly stylized so as to sound sufficiently archaic.

Grammatically Scott contents himself with the old form of the second person singular (*thou, thee, thine*) and the *-eth* and *-est* endings in the present tense of verbs in the third and second person singular. The omission of the auxiliary verb *as*, for instance, in *he came not*, in Scott's time only used in poetry, is also somewhat archaic.

The lexical part is more varied and interesting. There are, to begin with, numerous conventional epithets commonly used in popular ballads — *lady bright, lady gay, my lady fair, the Baron bold, the bloody grave (also the dark and deep grave), the bold Buccleuch, the Knight so true, good St. John, good steel spearhe, wild winds*, etc. There are also many words belonging to poetical convention — such as *chamber, bower, trysting place, behold*. There is, too, a sprinkling of archaic religious phraseology — “by Mary’s might”, “by the black rood-stone (i. e. road-stone), and by holy St. John”, “by Mary”. Along with conventional epithets, Scott uses many others, expressive of the melancholy that sentimentalism first made fashionable. Scott makes use of obsolete words — such as *I trow, well-nigh*, but introduces them sparingly, only to create a sense of antiquity.

It is noteworthy that the vocabulary of the ballad is for the greater part of Germanic origin, to the exclusion of the more bookish words of French-Norman or Latin descent. The latter are obviously in the minority, the poet preferring words of simple and concrete meaning, such as express the physical details of times past or details pertaining to natural scenery. It is also in the simplest words of the ballad tradition that Scott delineates his heroes. The poet's way of portraying them is rather elementary, as is only consistent with the manner of the ballad. Of the Baron we know that he is “bold” — that is the epithet that sticks to him from first to last, — that his looks are “sad and sour”, that he is “moody” and brutal, which last feature is not directly mentioned but is disclosed in his speeches and actions. Of his feelings only that much is described as strikes the eye of a close observer: his brow changes from dark to “blood-red high”, and “from high blood-red to pale”, he tosses and turns in his sleep, and his sleep is heavy. Of the lady we know she is “fair”, “bright” and “gay” (these epithets persist all through the ballad); that her emotions find outward expression in mournful silence, in blushes and fainting-fits. In the concluding stanzas of the ballad the grief and remorse of lady and knight are made real and tangible in the irrevocable steps they take in giving up life for the sake of voluntary seclusion. In their respective spheres both are transgressors and they redeem their sins in one and the same way, the description of which runs, ballad-wise, on strictly parallel lines. In the penul-

Unate stanza the parallel is rendered by the two symmetrical halves of the stanza:

There is a nun in Dryburgh bower, There is a monk in Melrose tower,
No'er looks upon the sun; He speaketh word to none.

In the last stanza the parallels are arranged so as to alternate and to interrupt one another:

That nun who no'er beholds the day,
That monk who speaks to none —
That nun was Smaytho'me's Lady gay,
That monk the bold Baron.

In both cases the parallel contains elements of contrast: *nun — monk, bower — tower, never looks — speaks to none; the nun who no'er beholds the day was once a Lady gay, the monk who speaks to none was in his time bold.*

In this way is the matter of a weird story skillfully arranged so as to supply a carefully manipulated gradation, supported by parallel and contrasting lines, that mutually reinforce and give fresh meaning to one another. The most important role, besides choice of words and structure, is played by rhythm and rhyme. The measure is ballad-measure with no special artistry of design, just the usual stanza of four lines with alternate rhyme and four and three beats. According to the crude versification of the ballad the number of syllables can depart from the fixed number of eight and six (in many lines it does) but the distribution of the stresses is strictly observed. This varies the monotony of the ballad measure, as for example in stanzas 3, 10, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, etc.

Sometimes Scott has twelve syllable lines, and the drumlike beat of stresses acquires a freedom and energy that more regular versification might lack. Characteristically, those lapses from the eights-and-sixes-standard are accompanied by abundant use of medial rhyme that goes far in tinging the ballad with the quaint flavour of old poetry and in contributing to the musical effects required, for instance, to render the clanging of armour (stanza 3), or the droning of chanted prayers (stanzas 22, 30).

The coarse music of the ballad, the simplest metrical schemes varied by slight, but continuous deviation from these schemes, match the general structure of the poem, at once simple and elaborate, well suited for a tale of feelings elementary and conflicting.

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. Summarize Scott's description of the scenery. Does it harmonize with the subject-matter of the ballad? Give examples.
2. What stanzas refer to historical events? What can we gather about the situation in Scotland?

3. Quote stanzas illustrative of Scott's use of the supernatural. What role does it play in the poem? Is it consistent with the spirit of old ballads?

4. Point out all the cases of repetition occurring in the poem. What is their stylistic value?

5. Pick out the narrative stanzas. In what ratio do they stand to the dialogues? Which of the two prevail?

6. Is the speech of the characters in any way individualized? If so, how? Note the use of the third person when referring to herself in the lady's speech.

7. Cite instances of Scott's medial rhymes. How do they affect the rhythm of the ballad?

8. Are there any alliterations or assonances in the poem and what, if any, is their stylistic effect?

9. Are there many tropes in Scott's poem? Give examples and define the quality and role of these tropes.

10. Draw a list of the words that occur most often in the poem. Explain their importance.

11. Find examples of archaic syntax in the poem. Why does Scott introduce it?

12. Put down the lexical archaisms, also the words adding *couleur locale* to the poem.

13. Is this poem characteristic of romantic poetry? Prove your statement.

14. Why can it be said that Scott's poem resembles a popular ballad more than Coleridge's does?

15. Would you call Zhukovsky's translation exact? Give arguments in favour of your point of view.

Byron was certainly the most conspicuous personality among the great early 19th century poets of England. Friends of freedom all the world over idolized him for his revolutionary fervour, his scorn of "cant political, cant religious, cant moral". With the single exception of Shakespeare, Byron is of all English poets the one whom Russian readers know best. But in his own country his position is not so secure for manifold reasons.

In the first place, there was the outcry against Byron's fierce war with the tyranny and hypocrisy of Church and State (that outcry was thinly disguised as a protest against the poet's alleged immorality). Then, in the second half of the 19th century, during the supremacy of "Art for art's sake" doctrines, Byron's poetry was proclaimed technically deficient, unmusical and old-fashioned. The glaring injustice of this opinion is but too obvious. It was rooted in the prejudice of the aesthetes, — poets and critics, — against all poetry with an obvious message, a direct exposure of social and ethical concepts. Besides, the poets of the second half of the century, especially those of the esthetic school, followed the example of Byron's romantic contemporaries rather than his. The further development of the greater part of English poetry proceeded in a direction contrary to that taken by Byron. Therefore, in England his art was and still is criticized as belonging to a past epoch and divorced from modern trends.

This view is only true in so far as Byron differed from the other romantics in not rebelling so violently against the classical traditions of English poetry: to him classicism was the style of the Age of Reason. Now, though Byron was also disappointed with the results of the French Revolution, he looked upon it as the greatest event of modern times; and he certainly did not think the ideas that had inspired it false and pernicious. He felt that the phi-

losophers of the Enlightenment had been too optimistic but he remained true to their ideals of liberty and equality. He had therefore a great contempt for the elder romantics who had given up these ideals and renounced their former beliefs in favour of mystical and irrational creeds.

Byron never doubted the supremacy of reason. He said:

... Let it not be over-aw'd
By tyrannous threats to force you into faith
'Gainst all external sense and inward feeling.

(*Cain*, Act II, Scene 2)

It is for the sake of reason and human dignity that a poet should, like Dante and Milton, never tire of combating the enemies of liberty:

And I will war, at least in words (and — should
My chance so happen — deeds), with all who war
With Thought; — and of Thought's foes by far most rude
Tyrants and syrophants have been and are.

(*Don Juan*, Canto IX, stanza XXIV)

Byron was well aware that in "freedom's battles" the greatest courage was ever displayed by rank-and-file fighters: "They fight for freedom who were never free" (*Childe Harold*, Canto I, stanza LXXXVI). And yet he more often dwells on the valour of the individual, the leader who is different from "the crowd of vulgar men". Thus the poet describes at great length the Corsair,

That man of loveliness and mystery,
Scarce seen to smile, and seldom heard to sigh;
Whose name appals the fiercest of his crew,
And tints each swarthy cheek with sallow hue.

Sun-burnt his cheek, his forehead high and pale
The sable curls in wild profusion veil,
And oft perforce his rising lip reveals
The haughtier thought it curbs, but scarce conceals.

There was a laughing Devil in his snarl,
That raised emotions both of rage and fear;
And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,
Hope withering fled — and Mercy sigh'd farewell!

(*The Corsair*, Canto I, stanzas VIII—IX)

In Byron's art romantic individualism always fought against his taste for classical poetry whose harmony, symmetry and regularity he looked upon as the embodiment of his rationalist ideals. But his own work based on classical models, the poems *The Curse of Minerva* (1811) and *Hints from Horace* (1811) and the tragedies of *Marino Faliero* (1820) and *Sardanapalus* (1821), are

inferior to his romantic dramas *Manfred* (1817) and *Cain* (1821), to his poems *The Vision of Judgment* (1821) and *Don Juan* (1818-1823).

Byron is at his best in poems glorifying freedom and in those voicing tragic and conflicting passions in a way that is essentially romantic and lyrical. A representative poem is one of his earliest, *When We Two Parted* (1808):

When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my brow —
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame:
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o'er me —
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I know thee,
Who knew thee too well: —
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met —
In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee? —
With silence and tears.

In the poet's lifetime it was his romantic narrative poems (*The Giaour*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *Parina*, etc.) and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* that won the greatest popularity. They were particularly admired in continental Europe where they bred a host of imitations and stimulated a new mode of thought and feeling, so-called "Byronism"; they also gave rise to a new hero, solitary, enigmatic and involved in a titanic struggle against oppression.

In after-years Byron's satirical poems and some of his shorter lyrical pieces were remembered best.

STANZAS FOR MUSIC

(1814)

I speak not, I trace not, I breathe not thy name;
There is grief in the sound, there is guilt in the fame;
But the tear which now burns on my cheek may impart
The deep thoughts that dwell in that silence of heart.

Too brief for our passion, too long for our peace,
Were those hours — can their joy or their bitterness cease?
We repent, we abjure, we will break from our chain, —
We will part, we will fly to — unite it again!

Oh! thine be the gladness, and mine be the guilt!
Forgive me, adored one! — forsake, if thou wilt;
But the heart which is thine shall expire undebased,
And *man* shall not break it — whatever *thou* may'st.

And stern to the haughty, but humble to thee,
This soul in its bitterest blackness shall be;
And our days seem as swift, and our moments more sweet,
With thee by my side, than with worlds at our feet.

One sigh of thy sorrow, one look of thy love,
Shall turn me or fix, shall reward or reprove;
And the heartless may wonder at all I resign —
Thy lip shall reply, not to them, but to mine.

COMMENTS

On May 10, 1814 Byron wrote to the most intimate of his friends, the poet Thomas Moore: "Thou hast asked me for a song and I enclose you an experiment, which has cost me something more than trouble, and is, therefore, less likely to be worth your taking any in your proposed setting. Now, if it be so, throw it into the fire without phrase." The "experiment" was the above "Stanzas" to be set to music. Thence the easy flowing melody of the poem.

It is a poem of love and grief, of shame and remorse. Its subject is the dialectics of passion, which is sad and joyous, right and wrong, bitter and sweet. The poet humbles himself by speaking of "guilt" and at the same time asserts his pride by describing his heart as undebased.

The poem as a whole is a welter of contradictions. In the beginning the impression is that all is over between the lovers ("I speak not, I trace not", etc.), but it appears later they are and will be together still. He says there is guilt in her fame, and yet he hopes the guilt will be his. He asks her to forgive him, but can also face her desertion. He warns her that his heart will be broken

and his soul forever black and bitter — only to say, in the same breath, that they enjoy the greatest happiness together (stanza 4). The initial recognition of guilt turns into a statement of indifference to the opinion of the "heartless".

The conflict of feeling is reflected in the logical lapse between the two couplets of the 4th stanza, noted above, and in the illogicality of the conjunction *and* linking contradictory statements (stanzas 4 and 5). The urgency of mutually opposed emotions is chiefly expressed by means of gradation and antithesis. As an admirer of classical regularity, Byron favoured a symmetrical disposition of antitheses, and skilfully manipulated gradation.

The equirhythmical structure of gradation is introduced in the very first line with its rising wave of passion:

I speak not, | I trace not, | I breathe not...

0 1 0 | 0 1 0 | 0 1 0

The three parts of the gradation are rhythmically and grammatically identical, differing only in degree. Well balanced antithesis is maintained in all the stanzas, where we have a caesura separating half-lines that are identical in rhythm and structure:

There is grief in the sound, || there is guilt in the fame...

Too brief for our passion, || too long for our peace...

Oh! thine be the gladness, || and mine be the guilt!

And stern to the haughty, & but humble to thee...

In the concluding couplet of the 2nd stanza gradation and antithesis are strictly parallel:

We repent, we abjure, we will break from our chain, —

We will part, we will fly to — unite it again!

On occasion the antithesis is expressed by single words:

Can their *joy* or their *bitterness* cease?

Sometimes there are two contrasts within the same line:

... Shall turn me or fix, shall reward or reprove.

"Not to *them*, but to *mine*" is an interesting example of incomplete antithesis, with the two parts closely modelled upon one another rhythmically, but grammatically disparate.

The diction of the poem and its metaphors seem to be influenced by classical example. It is, on the whole, rather abstract, with many abstract nouns (*grief, guilt, fame, passion, peace, joy, bitterness, sorrow, love, gladness*) and traditionally poetic epithets — *swift days, long hours, sweet moments*. Even the verbs have an abstract quality — *repent, abjure, forgive, forsake, reward, reprove, resign*. Not one of them conveys a direct image. The metaphors

mostly belong to those that are common in late 18th century poetry: the tear that "burns on the cheek", "break from ... chain" (figuratively used), the heart that is "broken", but "undebased", "worlds at our feet", etc. And yet there are striking exceptions, such as "silence of heart", "bitterest blackness", and the opening line, with its upward surge of emotion and its effective culmination. So great is the intensity of feeling, the sense of powerful personality, the nervous and varied movement of the poem, its antithetical and climactic structure that the prevailing mood appears to be essentially unclassical.

The very metre of the poem, the anapaest, a measure of next to no value, by classical standards, is in itself a symptom of Byron's departure from classicism. The anapaest is a lively measure having the accent on every third syllable. This measure adequately renders swift movement and is well suited to musical accompaniment. The poet makes also use of the rule of English prosody which allows to omit an unstressed syllable in the first foot, substituting, in this case, an iambus for an anapaest. The result is, however, that the whole corresponding line is no longer felt as anapaestic with the first foot shortened but as amphibrachic, i.e. consisting of feet of three syllables with the second syllable stressed.¹ No less than twelve lines out of the twenty lines of the poem are amphibrachic lines. The shift from one measure to another, sometimes very abrupt, is a rhythmical way of expressing the shifts in mood, thus indirectly revealing the contradictory nature of the speaker's feelings. An amphibrachic foot, stressed in the middle, appears more weighty and, as it were, more deliberate. Thus in the 1st stanza the fourth amphibrachic line, "The deep thoughts | that dwell in | the silence | of heart" (○ ◡ ○ | ○ ◡ ○ | ○ ◡ ○ | ○ ◡), is heavier in conformity with its weighty matter. In the first and only amphibrachic line of the 2nd stanza, "Too brief for | our passion, | too long for | our peace" (◡ ◡ ○ | ○ ◡ ○ | ◡ ◡ ○ | ○ ◡), the amphibrach with its initial spondee carries greater weight than the remaining lines, particularly as it appears to disharmonize with the word *brief*. But the underlying notion of hours too brief for the strength of feeling is in marked contrast with the superficial impression conveyed by *brief* and is supported by the second half of the line "too long for | our peace" with its symmetrically placed spondee. Characteristically, in the 3rd and 5th stanzas, more marked for a pensive and meditative mood, amphibrachic lines are prevalent, while in the 4th the sudden transition to anapaest together with an unexpected move from one tense to another denotes an obvious quickening of the tempo as well as a new phase of feeling.

¹ Though the term is not current in English prosody we will use it here for the sake of convenience.

Within the five stanzas of the poem the alternation of amphibrach and anapaest is the same only in stanzas 3 and 5, but it adopts a different pattern in each of the remaining stanzas. Taking *am* for amphibrach and *an* for anapaest, we shall have: (1) *am — an — an — am*; (2) *am — an — an — an*; (3 and 5) *am — am — an — an*; (4) *am — am — an — an*.

All the stanzas consist of two regular couplets, four feet each; the number of syllables, both stressed and unstressed, is strictly observed. And yet metrical liberties are taken that are not consistent with the rigidity of classical verse. For example, Byron allows of enjambment, — a proceeding altogether undesirable from the point of view of classicism, unless applied for burlesque or mock-heroic or satirical purposes.

In the 2nd stanza:

Too brief for our passion, too long for our peace
Were those hours...

In the 5th stanza:

One sigh of thy sorrow, one look of thy love,
Shall turn me or fix...

Enjambment along with the shifting pattern of the rhythmical scheme detracts from the impression of classical regularity.

The subject-matter of the poem is still more unclassical by virtue of the powerful flow of emotion, of its vehement, personal tone, not that of an imaginary speaker, but clearly that of the poet himself. The lapses of logic, the headlong passion, the frenzy of contradictions, the intensely personal, self-revealing tone all represent a break with classicism and betray Byron's romantic affinities. Lyrical individualism colours his poems and expresses the experience of tragic post-revolutionary generations with an energy that took the readers by storm.

DON JUAN

(1818—1823)

Canto X

LXXIX

Alas, how deeply painful is all payment!

Take lives, take wives, take aught except men's purses,	1
As Machiavel ¹ shows those in purple raiment,	2
Such is the shortest way to general curse.	

¹ Machiavel (1469—1527) — Florentine politician and writer, author of the pamphlet *The Prince*, wherein he gives a clear exposure of those human weaknesses monarchs should know to ensure the success of their reign.

They hate a murderer much less than a claimant
 On that sweet ore which everybody nurses. —
 Kill a man's family, and he may brook it,
 But keep your hands out of his breeches pocket.

LXXX

So said the Florentine; ¹ ye monarchs, hearken
 To your instructor. Juan now was borne,
 Just as the day began to wane and darken,
 O'er the high hill which looks, with pride or scorn
 Towards the great city. — Ye who have a spark in
 Your veins of Cockney ² spirit, smile or mourn,
 According as you take things well or ill: —
 Bold Britons, we are now on Shooter's Hill! ³

LXXXI

The sun went down, the smoke rose up, as from
 A half-unquench'd volcano, o'er a space
 Which well becom'd the "Devil's drawing-room",
 As some have qualified that wondrous place;
 But Juan felt, though not approaching home,
 As one who, though he were not of the race,
 Revered the soil, of those true sons the mother
 Who butcher'd half the earth, and bullied t'other. ⁴

LXXXII

A mighty mass of brick, and smoke, and shipping,
 Dirty and dusky, but as wide as eye
 Could reach, with here and there a sail just skipping
 In sight, then lost amidst the forestry
 Of masts; a wilderness of steeples peeping
 On tip-toe through their sea-coal canopy,
 A huge, dun cupola, like a fool's cap crown
 On a fool's head — and there is London Town!

LXXXIII

But Juan saw not this: each wreath of smoke
 Appear'd to him but as the magic vapour

¹ the Florentine — Machiavel

² Cockney — here: a Londoner

³ Shooter's Hill — here: a hill overlooking London; now the name of an area in south-east London

⁴ By the first half Byron means India, by the second — America.

Of some alchymic furnace, from whence broke
 The wealth of worlds (a wealth of tax and paper)
 The gloomy clouds, which o'er it as a yoke
 Are bow'd, and put the sun out like a taper,
 Were nothing but the natural atmosphere,
 Extremely wholesome, though but rarely clear.

LXXXIV

He paused — and so will I; as doth a crew
 Before they give their broadside. By and by,
 My gentle countrymen, we will renew
 Our old acquaintance; and at least I'll try
 To tell you truths you will not take as true,
 Because they are so — A male Mrs Fry,¹
 With a soft besom will I sweep your halls,
 And brush a web or two from off the walls.

LXXXV

Oh, Mrs Fry! Why go to Newgate? Why
 Preach to poor rogues? And wherefore not begin
 With Carlton,² or with other houses? Try
 Your hand at harden'd and imperial sin.
 To mend the people's an absurdity,
 A jargon, a mere philanthropic din,
 Unless you make their betters better; — Fie!
 I thought you had more religion, Mrs Fry.

LXXXVI

Teach them the decencies of good threescore;
 Cure them of tours, huzzar and highland dresses;
 Tell them that youth once gone returns no more;
 That hired huzzas³ redeem no land's distresses;
 Tell them Sir William Curtis⁴ is a bore,

¹ Mrs Fry — a philanthropist who busied herself in reforming the position of the female prisoners in Newgate.

² Carlton (House) — a palace in London where King George IV resided. He was by that time more than fifty years old but still strove to behave like a young man, masquerading on occasion as huzzar or highlander. Thence Byron's reproof in stanza LXXXVI.

³ Byron means the insincere and mercenary applause that fell to the lot of the King during his journeys to Ireland and Scotland.

⁴ Sir William Curtis — Alderman of London, notorious for his hatred of all democrats and his fawning behaviour to George while he still was Prince of Wales and Regent. Thence the comparison of Curtis to Falstaff ("the witless Falstaff", as distinct from Shakespeare's hero) and George to "Hal", nickname of Prince Henry before he became king under the name of Henry V.

Too dull even for the dullest of excesses,
The witless Falstaff of a hoary Hal,
A fool whose bells have ceased to ring at all.

LXXXVII

Tell them, though it may be perhaps too late
On life's worn confine, jaded, bloated, sated,
To set up vain pretences of being great,
'Tis not so to be good; and be it stated,
The worthiest kings have ever loved least state;
And tell them — But you won't, and I have prated
Just now enough; but by-and-by I'll prattle,
Like Roland's horn in Roncevaux's battle.¹

COMMENTS

Don Juan is a mock-epic poem intended as a survey of the most important European countries. But Byron only had the time to complete the adventures of his hero, a Spanish nobleman, in Spain, Turkey and Russia. The narrative breaks off in the middle of the young man's stay in England.

The excerpt under examination affords a description of Don Juan's first glimpse of London. A propos of the toll that Juan has to pay on English roads Byron goes into a long digression (stanza LXXIX) on the power of money. It is one of the poet's numerous sallies on that subject (see *Don Juan*, Canto XII, III—VI). Then, from Shooter's Hill, Juan looks down upon London. His first-sight impressions become the pretext for a new digression on the hypocrisy of modern philanthropy and on the task facing an honest poet.

The basic feature of the present selection (and, surely, of the whole of the poem) is diversity of style and stylistic devices. Byron shifts from one mood and tonality to another with truly chameleon-like rapidity. From comical digression he turns to poetical description, thence to the most prosaic details until he rises to downright invective. A typical example is provided by the closing couplet of stanza LXXXI: Juan, we hear,

Revered the soil, of those true sons the mother
Who butcher'd half the earth, and bullied t'other.

The distance from the high-flown and dignified "revered the soil" to "butcher'd half the earth" and the familiar "t'other" is very great. Another example might be quoted from stanza LXXX:

¹ Roncevaux's battle — the battle where Roland died the death of a hero, because he had too long refused to blow his horn to summon some aid when in a hopeless position (*The Song of Roland* belongs to the 11th century)

...Ye who have a spark in
Your veins of Cockney spirit, smile or moorn,
According as you take things well or ill: —
Bold Britons, we are now on Shooter's Hill

The solemn form of apostrophe ("Ye who have") is mocked by the colloquial reservation "according as you take things well or ill", as well as by the humorous enjambment and the compound rhyme ("a spark in / Your veins"), all of which, in their turn, are reversed by the grand style in "bold Britons". See also the final lines of stanza LXXXVII.

These shifts spread a satirical atmosphere over the whole scene. Comical effects, irony, wit give the poem its peculiar brilliance. Irony is achieved by using the grand style to describe low subjects (as in stanza LXXIX, where ordinary greed is exposed after the rules of flaming oratory), or, vice versa, by making a style definitely "low" serve to introduce admittedly grand subjects, as in the description of the great city of London, where "low" words and notions appear, e.g. "A mighty mass of brick, and smoke, and shipping" (stanza LXXXII).

All the usual elements of lofty poetic style are in *Don Juan* travestied and turned to comical ends. Quotations, allusions are ridiculous when Machiavel is referred to as the source of the doubtful aphorism about breeches' pockets: "so said the Florentine" (LXXIX), or when Byron mentions Shakespeare's characters to illustrate modern customs, or, funnier still, threatens to speak to the reader ("prattle") as loud as Roland's horn had sounded during the legendary battle.

The same might be observed about the metaphors and similes employed by the poet: most of them are distinctly "low", as in the above quoted line "butcher'd half the earth and bullied t'other" or the simile "put the sun out like a taper" (LXXXIII), or "With a soft besom will I sweep your halls" (LXXXIV), or a "cupola, like a foolscap crown / On a fool's head" (LXXXII).

When Byron introduces higher-flown metaphors they sound comical. The poetic epithet "hoary" with its connotations of dignified old age is funny in connection with "Hal" (short and familiar for Henry) and in the proximity of the coarse metaphor about a fool whose bells have ceased to ring at all. Byron speaks about the smoke of London as about an "alchymic furnace, from whence broke / The wealth of worlds". These fine phrases are, however, cancelled by the parenthetical remark that the wealth is a wealth of tax and paper. Such is Byron's art of reducing a phenomenon of recognized scope to a few of the simplest elements — which process more often than not has the effect of anticlimax.

One might safely say that devices of traditional eloquence only appear to be made ridiculous by the context, as in the example of

"bold Britons", a rhetorical apostrophe out of tune with Byron's avowedly ironical attitude towards his compatriots.

The stately periphrase of "those in purple raiment" (for "kings") becomes absurd when coming close on "lives", "wives" and "purses" with all the common associations attached to them.

The prevailing intonation of the above extract is colloquial. It is created by syntactical means, by preference of simple sentences, or when complex, short or containing no more than two clauses. Whenever the syntax becomes involved, it has an obviously ironic ring (stanza LXXXIII). In this stanza Byron skilfully introduces elements of represented speech. This is not the poet, but his hero speaking or thinking.

The colloquial intonation is largely brought out by Byron's manner of breaking up the rhythm and melody of stanzas and lines. Thus in stanza LXXXV:

Oh, Mrs Fry! Why go to Newgate? Why
Preach to poor rogues? And wherefore not begin
With Carlton, or with other houses?

The first line is broken into three parts which make us, in reading, stress the intonation of everyday speech, rather than the rhythm.

Frequent enjambment has an exactly similar effect: "each wreath of smoke / Appear'd to him..." (LXXXIII), or "Why / Preach to poor rogues" (LXXXV), or "Try / Your hand at harden'd and imperial sin" (LXXXV). (Also see stanzas LXXXVI, LXXXVII.) Enjambment forces the rhythm of spoken language above the natural rhythm involved in that measure. The natural speaking voice makes itself heard quite distinctly. It receives plenty of help from Byron's comic rhymes — such as *brook it* and *pocket* (LXXIX), *hearken* and *spark in* (LXXX), *from* and *drawing-room* (LXXXI), *fie* and *Mrs Fry*. In the last case the rhyme itself contains a comment on Mrs Fry, a comment expressed by intonation, punctuation, exclamation rather than by distinct utterance. The medial rhyme of *lives* and *wives* — comical, because uncalled for in an octave, — also adds to the impression of lively talk.

The vocabulary of the poem is also mainly colloquial, including such words as *breeches*, *pockets*, *brick*, *shipping*, *dirty*, *besom*, *rogue*, *jargon*, *din*, *prattle*. Whenever words of higher rank turn up they are employed ironically, as, for instance, *redeem* in company with the colloquial *huzzas*.

Colloquialisms are supported by phraseology. Contrary to classical usage, Byron says: "he is a bore", "try your hand at", "to get up vain pretences", "by and by", "take things well or ill". This gives his poem the tone of informal conversation. For the same purpose Byron stresses his meaning by using the same verb in its different tenses, substitutes auxiliaries for notional verbs, in that way

achieving the impression of curt, unceremonious speech. For example:

He paused — and so will I; as doth a crew
Before they give their broadside.

Also:

And tell them — but you won't...

The illusion is kept up by Byron's familiar address to the readers ("My gentle countrymen, we will renew / Our old acquaintance") and to the philanthropic Mrs Fry whom he charges to be his own messenger to the king.

Repetition for the sake of emphasis ("too dull even for the dullest of excesses"), prosaisms, such as "qualified", consciously placed next to the extraordinary metaphor characterizing London as the "Devil's drawing-room", a deliberate awkwardness of expression, as, for example, "...I'll try / To tell you truths you will not take as true / Because they are so" (LXXXIV), the comically accurate modification of the hackneyed metaphor of the "unquench'd volcano" by the mathematical "half" — "half-unquench'd volcano" (LXXXI) all go together to further the destruction of conventional notions of the poetic and of poetic language. In his own words, Byron was engaged in writing "a playful satire with as little poetry as could be helped".

Byron often enjoys undermining set phraseology by revealing the inner meaning obliterated by long usage. For example, he says: "to mend the people's an absurdity... / Unless you make their betters better" (LXXXV). "Their" (or "our") "betters" is the designation of socially and, allegedly, morally superior people. Byron exposes the absurdity of deriving the idea of moral worth from social position by suggesting a "betterment of the betters" — a suggestion all the more comical since "betters", originally a derivative from the comparative degree, should not, logically speaking, admit of improvement.

The sphere of poetic language is infinitely broadened by taking in idioms, low colloquial speech, the vocabulary of modern business life (*quality, philanthropic, claimant, tax, paper, atmosphere, Carlton House, Newgate*). In contact with words of recognized poetic rank all these are thus raised to their level and become part of an entirely unprecedented poetic style. The peculiarities of that style are well rendered in the Russian translation by T. Gneditch.

Byron wrote his mock-epic in octaves, that is in eight-lined pentameter stanzas with the rhyme-scheme *a b a b a b c c*. This measure was made famous by Tasso and afterwards used in mock-heroic poems of Italian Renaissance authors, Berni and Pulci. Byron and his Italian predecessors made the stately octave serve humorous and satirical purposes, especially by designing the final couplet for ironical maxims or epigrams (see stanzas LXXIX, LXXXI, LXXXVI).

The poet's speech is not only his own, such as would come naturally from himself. It incorporates that of his hero. In stanza LXXXIII the two voices intermingle — Juan's naïve enthusiasm for the great city expressed in high poetic metaphors ("magic vapour of some alchymic furnace, from whence broke the wealth of worlds") is set off by the author's cool and detached comments ("a wealth of tax and paper"). The gloomy clouds over London are to Juan "the natural atmosphere, extremely wholesome", but to the poet that atmosphere is "but rarely clear", and "puts the sun out like a taper". This prosaic and rather slighting judgment is, however, accompanied by the fresh and poetic simile of "clouds bowed like a yoke", almost casually expressing another side of the poet's versatile personality — his hatred of all oppression soever and his way of looking upon natural objects in the light suggested by his hatred.

The personality of the author as it is manifested even in this short extract is decidedly untraditional, ranging from the comic picture of himself as the "male Mrs Fry", with a woman's natural implement, namely a besom, — to the dignified notion of the poet blowing his horn, like Roland in the battle of the fine old epic. The range of the author's personality, from prattler *à propos de rien* to the flaming denouncer of all evil, one who has an eye for the variety of realistic details that make up London (all of them summed up by the humorously inappropriate folk-lore appellation of "London Town") no less than for the vices of monarchs — is truly amazing, and it accounts for the stylistic range of the poem. It is in *Don Juan* that Byron wins his greatest triumphs. Romantic hatred of all that shackles personal and social freedom, romantic disregard of time-worn poetic conventions break through here with greater force than in his earlier poetry. It is in this poem, therefore, that Byron's participation in the romantic revolt in literature and his innovation of poetic language stand out most clearly.

THE VISION OF JUDGMENT

(1821)

XVI

Saint Peter sat by the celestial gate,

And nodded o'er his keys: when, lo! there came
A wondrous noise he had not heard of late —

A rushing sound of wind, and stream, and flame!
In short, a roar of things extremely great,

Which would have made all save a saint exclaim;
But he, with first a start and then a wink,
Said, "There's another star gone out, I think!"

XVII

But ere he could return to his repose,
 A cherub flapp'd his right wing o'er his eyes —
 At which Saint Peter yawn'd, and rubb'd his nose;
 "Saint porter," said the angel, "prithoo risel!"
 Waving a goodly wing, which glow'd, as glows
 An earthly peacock's tail, with heavenly dyes;
 To which the Saint replied, "Well, what's the matter
 Is Lucifer come back with all this clatter?"

XVIII

"No," quoth the cherub; "George the Third is dead."
 "And who is George the Third?" replied the apostle;
 "What George? What Third?" "The king of England," said
 The angel. "Well! he won't find kings to jostle
 Him on his way; but does he wear his head?
 Because the last we saw here had a tussle,
 And ne'er would have got into heaven's good graces,
 Had he not flung his head in all our faces.

XIX

"He was, if I remember, king of Franco;
 That head of his, which could not keep a crown
 On earth, yet ventured in my face to advance
 A claim to those of martyrs — like my own;
 If I had had my sword, as I had once
 When I cut ears off, ¹ I had cut him down;
 But having but my *keys*, and not my brand,
 I only knock'd his head from out his hand.

XX

"And then he set up such a headless howl,
 That all the saints came out and took him in;
 And there he sits by St. Paul, cheek by jowl;
 That fellow Paul — the parvenu! ² The skin

¹ According to the Gospel legend, when Christ was betrayed by his disciple Judas, and his enemies came to arrest him, Peter the Apostle cut off the ear of one of these, a slave, with a sword, and was rebuked by Christ.

² Though the New Testament does not mention Paul among the disciples of Jesus Christ, it was he who assumed the role of a leader of the Christian communities and even upbraided Peter, the most revered of the first apostles.

Of Saint Bartholomew,¹ which makes his cowl
In heaven, and upon earth redeem'd his sin,
So as to make a martyr, never sped
Better than did this weak and wooden head.

XXI

"But had it come up here upon its shoulders,
There would have been a different tale to tell;
The fellow-feeling in the saints beholders
Seems to have acted on them like a spell;
And so this very foolish head heaven solders
Back on its trunk: it may be very well,
And seems the custom here to overthrow
Whatever has been wisely done below."

XXII

The angel answer'd, "Peter! do not pout:
The king who comes has head and all entire,
And never knew much what it was about —
He did as doth the puppet — by its wire,
And will be judged like all the rest, no doubt;
My business and your own is not to inquire
Into such matters, but to mind our cue —
Which is to act as we are bid to do."

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. How are Byron's politics conveyed in his poem?
2. What is Byron's manner of portraying heaven, its angels and saints? Is it religious, respectful, high-flown, poetic?
3. How does Byron reveal Saint Peter's good nature and good sense?
4. How does the angel address him?
5. Comment upon Peter's questions: "What George? What Third?". What is the effect produced by them?
6. Do Saint Peter and the angel resemble the traditional images of saints and angels?
7. Is their speech appropriate to those traditional figures?
8. How are Byron's humorous effects achieved? Analyse the diction of his characters. Comment on the phraseology, the similes, the vocabulary.
9. Are Byron's octaves suited to the burlesque style of the poem?

¹ According to the Christian legend, Apostle Bartholomew was flayed alive.

ON THIS DAY I COMPLETE MY THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR

Missolonghi, Jan. 22 1834

'Tis time this heart should be unmoved,
Since others it hath ceased to move;
Yet, though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love!

My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone!

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze —
A funeral pile.

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,
The exalted portion of the pain
And power of love, I cannot share,
But wear the chain.

But 'tis not *thus* — and 'tis not *here* —
Such thoughts should shake my soul, nor *now*,
Where glory decks the hero's bier,
Or binds his brow.

The sword, the banner, and the field,
Glory and Greece, around me reel
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
Was not more free.

Awake! (not Greece — she *is* awake!)
Awake, my spirit! Think through *whom*
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,
And then strike home.

Tread those reviving passions down,
Unworthy manhood! — unto thee
Indifferent should the smile or frown
Of beauty be.

If thou regrett'st thy youth, *why live?*
The land of honourable death
Is here: — up to the field, and give
Away thy breath!

Seek out — less often sought than found —
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest.

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. What different moods does this poem reflect? Point out the stanzas introducing a shift in mood and spirit.
 2. How can you explain the despondent tone of the first stanza?
 3. What is the poet's way of shaking off his despondency?
 4. Is the impression produced by the poem optimistic or pessimistic?
 5. Why does Byron call Greece "the land of honourable death"? What figure of speech is it?
 6. What images are associated in the poet's mind with Greece?
 7. Interpret the lines "...Glory decks the hero's bier / Or binds his brow".
 8. Analyse the tropes expressive of the poet's weariness.
 9. Is there any difference between the imagery of the earlier and the succeeding stanzas?
 10. What is expressed by the words "up to the field"? Give the proper term for that phenomenon.
 11. What is the form given to the whole of the poem?
 12. Analyse the metre of the poem. What is its most obvious metrical peculiarity?
 13. Dwell on the significance of the reduced fourth line of every stanza. How does it affect the poem as a whole?
 14. Among Russian translations of this lyric pick out the one you like best. Justify your choice.
 15. Compare Byron's *My soul is dark...* with Lermontov's translation («Душа моя мрачна...»). Does the translator preserve the metre of the original?
-

Shelley was no less of a revolutionary in his poetic style than in his political outlook, a position fraught with danger in the period of extreme reaction that began a year after his birth and was still in full swing when he died. There hardly is a more apt description of the epoch than that given in Shelley's sonnet *England in 1819*:

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king,—
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn, — mud from a muddy spring, —
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow, —
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field, —
An army, which liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield, —
Golden¹ and sanguine laws which lounge and slay;
Religion Christless, Godless — a book sealed;
A Senate, — Time's worst statute unrepealed, —
Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

Characteristically, this more than bleak poem ends on a note of hope. Shelley believed in the future of mankind and looked forward to the day when Intellectual Beauty would free "this world from its dark slavery". This hope fills his youthful poem *Queen Mab* (1813) and his later drama *Prometheus Unbound* (1818). The immortal Titan was doomed by a tyrannical god to an eternity of suffering for having given fire to men. But by the end of the drama he is released from his agony and the spirits of earth, sea and air rejoice in his liberation. Love of freedom and hatred of oppression live even in the gloomy tragedy of the *Cenci* (1819). In the poem *The Revolt of Islam* (1818), the leaders of the Revolt, the lovers Laon and Cythna, die. But clearly as Shelley saw the difficulties standing in the way of Revolution, he never lost his faith in its

¹ golden — here: mercenary

ultimate victory. In his political lyrics and in the *Musque of Anarchy* he calls on the people:

Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew.
Ye are many — they are few.

And yet, despite his optimistic view of history and its future evolution, Shelley's intimate lyrical poetry is very often deeply sad, almost tragic: he was an exile from his own country and lived long years in Italy; he was so much ahead of his time, both in literary theory and practice, that his poetry was understood by no more than a small group of people; his endeavours to take steps towards the realization of his political ideals collapsed, and the thought that nothing he wrote ever reached the minds of his readers was increasingly painful to him.

Grief finds its way into many of his lyrics, such as *Song* ("Rarely, rarely comest thou, Spirit of Delight", 1821), *Time* ("Unfathomable Seal whose waves are years", 1821), *To Night* ("Swiftly walk o'er the western wave", 1821), *A Lament* ("O world! O life! O time!", 1821). Here are two poems written in that vein.

MUTABILITY (1821)

I

The flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow dies;
All that we wish to stay
Tempts and then flies.
What is this world's delight?
Lightning that mocks the night,
Brief even as bright.

II

Virtue, how frail it is!
Friendship how rare!
Love, how it sells poor bliss
For proud despair!
But we, though soon they fall,
Survive their joy, and all
Which ours we call.

III

Whilst skies are blue and bright,
Whilst flowers are gay,
Whilst eyes that change ere night
Make glad the day;
Whilst yet the calm hours creep,
Dream thou — and from thy sleep
Then wake to weep.

A DIRGE (1822)

Rough wind, that moanest loud
Grief too sad for song;
Wild wind, when sullen cloud
Knells all the night long;
Sad storm, whose tears are vain,
Bare woods, whose branches strain,
Deep cavern and dreary main, —
Wail, for the world's wrong!

These poems are the wording of a romantic poet's vivid sense of the world's wrong and of his own forced isolation and helplessness. Shelley's revolutionary spirit is at its finest in the drama of *Prometheus*. It is inspired by the tragedy *Prometheus Bound* of the Greek dramatist Aeschylus (525—456 B. C.). Ancient Greece exercised a particular fascination upon the younger romantics as the birthplace of freedom and beauty. They infused the myths of old times with feelings and ideas that were wholly modern.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

(1818)

Monarch of Gods and Daemons, and All Spirits
But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requiest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair, — these are mine empire: —
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-buffing mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?

I ask yon Heaven, the allbeholding Sun,
 Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
 Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,
 Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
 Ah me! alas, pain, pain over, for ever!

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
 Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains
 Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
 Heaven's winged hound, polluting from thy lips
 His beak in poison not his own, tears up
 My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
 The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
 Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
 To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
 When the rocks split and close again behind:
 While from their loud abysses howling throug
 The gent of the storm, urging the rage
 Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.

COMMENTS

The monologue of Prometheus reproduced here lifts the curtain on the drama. It is at once a lament and a defiance, thence its peculiar tragic energy. It expresses endurance stretched to breaking-point and yet an uncrushed spirit and stubborn will. The fallen Titan speaks of unutterable pain, but that very pain makes him "more glorious far" than Zeus, his enemy and executioner.

Prometheus is depicted as chained to a rock over a precipice. All around are icy cliffs, ravines and mountain peaks. Above is the sky, below is the sea. It is a majestic, breathtaking landscape, as grand as the feelings actuating the suffering Titan. The style, naturally, matches the grandeur of feeling and scenery. Shelley's model is Milton whom he never tired of praising in prose and in verse (see *The Defence of Poetry* and the fragment *Milton's Spirit*). Milton had also chosen a cosmic subject, originating in myth (biblical myth, in the elder poet's case), and had sung a battle waged against God, the king of kings. His hero, too, was a rebel. But as a loyal Christian Milton censured the rebellious spirit of his Satan, which Shelley certainly could never do. Incidentally, he affirmed that the rebel is far more attractive in Milton's epic than God. Needless to say that this is much more the case in Shelley's drama.

Shelley uses Milton's (and Shakespeare's) blank verse: its freedom, its long pentameter lines with their sweeping strides have made it a favourite vehicle for meditative, philosophical or otherwise lofty poetry (cf. Wordsworth's *Prelude* and also Byron's *Man-*

fred and Cain, to quote but the most obvious examples). Shelley's blank verse differs radically from Milton's in being immune from Latin influence, from Milton's favourite inversions, such as post-substantival position of adjectives, and in making more ample use of enjambment and, consequently, in being freer in its movement.

The monologue begins with an apostrophe to Zeus, — extended, elaborate, including several specifications of its object. Prometheus then proceeds to list the crimes of Zeus against humanity. He has forced men to give him "knee-worship, prayer, and praise, / And toil, and becatombs of broken hearts" and the reward they have won is summed up in a line heavy with bitterness, for the reward is "fear and self-contempt and barren hope". The sad lot of mankind is unexpectedly and nobly contrasted to the happy lot of the Titan. He declares that he is the one who reigns and triumphs; his suffering is his empire; the stronger the one, the greater the other ("torture and solitude, / Scorn and despair, — these are mine empire").

Through these words of unconquerable pride cries of pain break ("Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!"). Titan and here he may be, but he is human too, and this is Shelley's way of bringing him closer to the world of ordinary men. The extract quoted above ends with Prometheus invoking the elements as witnesses to his agony. He is well aware he could put an instant end to it all. Nothing is required but recantation; nothing short of capitulation will do. And that is a moral impossibility.

The conflict, it would seem then, is moral and spiritual; the scene, the action, the "personae" belong equally to the sphere of imagination — or myth, which amounts to the same thing. But there is in that monologue a high concentration of physically concrete poetic details and imagery that give a convincing reality to abstract moral problems. In the two lines:

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals...

there are two epithets ("crawling", "moon-freezing"), two nouns ("spears" and "crystals") and one verb ("pierce") that are in the present context metaphorical. Further comes the oxymoron of "burning cold", the powerful periphrase of "Heaven's winged hound" (for "eagle") that differs from the classicist periphrase in its emotional and physical concreteness. So do the other tropes quoted above.

When Prometheus complains that rivets are wrenched from his wounds, that he is afflicted by howls and keen hail, all these things have a physical reality. So much so, in fact, that they make us forget that the "reality" belongs to the world of fancy: the rivets are wrenched by Earthquake-fiends, the howls and the hail are produced by genii of the storm — just what one would expect fiends

and genii to do, for Shelley has a truly romantic insight into imaginary things.

Almost every word, except, obviously, prepositions, conjunctions and the like, conveys a certain image, whether auditory or visual. For example:

While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.

The "loud abysses" (a remarkable auditory metaphor which one would need a sentence to paraphrase), the "genii of the storm" that "throng" (another metaphor!) "howling" (an uncanny detail, adding the weird music of terrifying sound to physical torture), that urge "the rage of whirlwind and afflict... with keen hail" — make up a veritable pile of metaphors rendering the concentration of horrors that lacerate the crucified Titan.

In this drama all is on the grandest scale, in time as well as in space. Prometheus mentions three thousand years, he repeats again and again "ever", "for ever", "aye", "there is no change", "no pause" — he is doomed in eternity. Even the briefest units of time (moments) are "aye divided by keen pangs / Till they seemed years". To harmonize with this, not only is the reader faced with eternity, but also with infinity: the mountains are of a size that baffles the very eagles, all round are abysses and precipices, bright and rolling worlds, empires, hecatombs, to say nothing of Sun, Heaven and Sea. All this immensity of space is alive with movement, it throngs, it howls, it is caught up in a whirlwind.

All the stylistic elements of the poem are subservient to the main task of rendering this infinite and eternal world of struggle and pain. The syntax is, accordingly, involved and elaborately dignified. The periods sometimes include several lines and some complex clauses, mostly attributive, as in the first lines:

Monarch of Gods and Daemons, and All Spirits
But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requiest for knee worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.

Attributive participial phrases are even more frequent than attributive clauses ("Heaven's winged hound, polluting from thy lips / His beak in poison not his own...", "...mine empire; — / More glorious far than those that thou surveyest / From thine unenvied throne, o Mighty God!"). Attributive participial phrases are complemented by adverbial participial phrases ("...and shapeless sights come wandering by, / The ghastly people of the realm of dream, / Mocking me..."), but these are comparatively few. The function of

these clauses and phrases is to give a fuller and more tangible notion of the subject. That fullness certainly owes much to Shelley's predilection for enumerations. One of them, containing a summary of Zeus's cruel acts, was quoted above. Another impressive example, forming a sort of gradation, refers to the mountain:

Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured, without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.

The impression is first made by positive statements ("black", "wintry", "dead") and then by negative ones ("unmeasured", "without herb", etc.). What the mountain is and what it is not equally characterizes its barrenness and desolation. The impression of exhaustive, all-inclusive completeness is certainly achieved.

Epithets, most of them metaphorical, are the natural complement to attributive clauses and phrases. Shelley favours compound epithets, remarkable for wealth of information. Such are "eagle-baffling mountains", "sleep-unsheltered hours", "moon-freezing crystals", "all-beholding sun", "ever-changing sea". None of them could be reduced to one adjective, but would require a phrase or a clause, for instance "a mountain so high that it baffles even eagles". Participial epithets also have the effect of weight and motion: *rolling, living, unmeasured, winged, crawling, burning, unweeded, quivering*, etc.

Some of Shelley's metaphors are breathtakingly grand and majestic. So are, for example, his "hecatombs of broken hearts" — a powerful summation of the world's misery. So are, too, his personifications of natural things, a reflection of the pantheistic tendencies of the poet's thought.

I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen?

Deaf waves, the rage of whirlwind, the geni of the storm, the fiends of Earthquake — all are different forms of presenting natural phenomena like living beings, who all take sides, either for or against the Titan, placed in their midst.

The vocabulary of the monologue harmonizes perfectly with the imaginary time, place, with the personality of the speaker and his awful fate. There are hardly any words that belong to everyday speech. The rare exceptions are elevated by their context. The simple word "rolling" acquires a metaphorical meaning when applied to worlds; "hung" becomes dignified because Prometheus hangs over a precipice and is nailed to an "eagle-baffling mountain". "Unmeasured" is meaningful as the climax of despair in the gradation that has been discussed above. "Crawling" makes part of a metaphor ("crawling glaciers") and loses its prosaic associations.

Elevated as the vocabulary is, abstract nouns are very few and they are not personified in the way they often were in classical verse. In Shelley's case they are just states of mind and become almost concrete (*fear, hope, scorn, despair, solitude*, etc.). However lofty, the words all carry concrete meaning and as often as not develop a figurative and symbolic meaning of their own. The vocabulary is very rich. For *see* Shelley uses *behold, regard* and *survey, for suffering — pangs, agony, pain, torture, misery, despair*.

Prometheus is a Man-God. His power, such as it is, is moral power, the power of self-sacrifice for a noble end. He regards everything on a high moral plane. He aggrandizes even his enemy, Zeus, by placing him on his own level: the two of them alone in this great world are sleepless and watchful. When he thinks of tortured humanity, he concentrates on their moral tragedy — "*fear and self-contempt and barren hope*". Everything is transfigured by his own greatness. A monologue coming from the lips of a majestic and noble figure must needs be couched in the most stately and solemn poetic language.

Though Shelley never knew Blake, his grand romantic visions, his uncontrollable imagination, his metaphorical language are akin to those of his predecessor.

LINES

(1822)

I

When the lamp is shattered
The light in the dust lies dead —
When the cloud is scattered
The rainbow's glory is shed.
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

II

As music and splendour
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute: —
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

III

When hearts have once mingled
 Love first leaves the well-built nest;
 The weak one is singled
 To endure what it once possessed.
 O Love! who bewailest
 The frailty of all things here,
 Why choose you the frailest
 For your cradle, your home, and your bier?

IV

Its passions will rock thee
 As the storms rock the ravens on high;
 Bright reason will mock thee,
 Like the sun from a wintry sky.
 From thy nest every rafter
 Will rot, and thine eagle home
 Leave thee naked to laughter,
 When leaves fall and cold winds come.

COMMENTS

This is one of Shelley's most tragic lyrics voicing his reflections on the mutability and evanescence of love. According to the poet, it is the weaker natures that are more constant in their affections and therefore suffer more. The pain and heartache of love no longer requited sharpen all other sensations — among them perception of outward things — and make poetically inclined minds project themselves on their surroundings tingling these with their own emotions.

This process of pain-sharpened perception is here rendered with an amazing concreteness of poetic vision. The very first lines are a bold blend of direct and indirect meaning. A common phenomenon is observed, but it is peculiarly worded: instead of the commonplace word "broken" used in connection with ordinary things, such as lamps, Shelley puts "shattered", with its connotations of catastrophic events, frequently applied to the sphere of emotions (as, for instance, "shattered life"):

When the lamp is shattered
 The light in the dust lies dead.

This, of course, is a metaphor based on the vividness of physical sensation: the lamp is broken — it is in the dust — it is the light that is broken and lies in the dust — the light has gone out — it is dead. This train of thought is condensed in the above quoted metaphor. The dead light is at the same time a symbol of dead hope and lost happiness.

Another exquisite metaphor is "the rainbow's glory is shed". *To shed* means 'to drop, to let fall' (e. g. *to shed tears, to shed leaves*; thence Shelley's *to shed glory*). Perhaps the use of *shed* in connection with the rainbow is justified by the idea that the rainbow dissolves in rain, and its splendour is literally "shed". But this, even if true, is no more than a remote association, and the expression is figurative. The next two statements are more or less literal, with the exception of "sweet tones" and "loved accents" (the latter instead of the more ordinary "voice"). But along with the two previous statements they are effective, because by the end of the 1st stanza Shelley has dwelt upon light, colour, sound and touch and has linked them all by symmetry in meaning and rhythm. The impression of unity and completeness arises because different senses have been appealed to. This is in the spirit of romantic syncretism of imagery which, it is supposed, should act on all senses. It is only in the 2nd stanza we come to realize the full impact of the imagery concentrated in the 1st — that imagery is bound up with the simile which brings out the main idea, that all feeling is finite and leaves behind nothing but deep sadness:

As music and splendour
Survive not the lute and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute.

The abstractions of music and splendour that sum up, as it were, the light, rainbow, lute and voice of the 1st stanza are given poetic life by the verb *to survive*: since they can (or cannot, as may happen) survive, — this means they are, or may be, living realities. Within this simile metaphor jostles metaphor, so to speak: "the heart's echoes" (that is, the remains of past love) which "render no song", "the mute spirit" — all these metaphors are further developed: there is no song to come from a mute spirit ("No song but sad dirges"). This is followed by a new outburst of similes: the sad dirges are likened to wind passing through a ruined cell and to the sorrowful sound of sea-waves. These auditory images are musically expressed by delicate orchestration of *n* and *m*:

No song when the spirit is mute: —
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

The sad passing of love is expressed metaphorically in the 3rd and 4th stanzas in their resolute breach with the hard and fast logic of common sense: the hearts that "mingle" — a metaphor that would certainly be rejected by the classics, the comparison of a strong heart to the well-built nest of love, lines that do not lend themselves to ordinary paraphrase but must be interpreted (as, for instance,

the lines "The weak one is singled / To endure what it once possessed", which seems to mean that the weaker heart of the two must be resigned to bear stoically and to still cherish the memory of what had been happiness before) — were certainly new in the poetry of the period. Blake had written things like that — but who ever read him then? So had Coleridge, in a way, but his inspiration soon ran dry, and he left behind only a small body of verse.

The evolution of love is condensed in three images rendering its birth, life and death (cradle, home, and bier). The despair and helpless misery of the forsaken lover is made clear by a string of rare and striking similes, all associated with high altitudes and the cruel cold inevitable high up above the earth, with storms tossing the ravens (as likely as not the association is caused by the nest mentioned in the preceding stanzas, and Shelley was thinking of ravens' nests shaken by north winds and thence about the birds themselves), with the cold beams of the sun, with the rotting nest of love set up eagle-high and pitifully crumbling to pieces.

The climax of the stanza and, probably, of the poem as well, is the profoundly illogical metaphor "leave thee naked to laughter". The literal meaning seems to be 'leave thee naked to be laughed at', but the way Shelley has it points to a figurative meaning — helpless, defenseless before the cruel laughter of others. Bringing together these words from entirely different and logically disconnected planes is a way of depicting broken-down defenses and utter desolation in the most powerful and dramatic manner. The juxtaposition of the lofty "eagle home" and the miserable nakedness exposed to the wintry suns and cold winds, is most poignant.

The poetic illogicality of meaning is seconded by the illogicality of the grammatic structure:

From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave thee naked to laughter...

Here the absence of *will* before *leave* makes for a certain difficulty. The same grammatical lapse can be observed in the 2nd stanza, where in the line "Like the wind through a ruined cell" the words *that passes* (or *that sounds*, or *that blows*) are omitted.

Those hurried skippings over words logically necessary further the impression of the unbearable emotional strain that is created by accretion of the boldest imagery expressive of destruction, decay and disaster (shattered lamp, light dead in the dust, shed glory of rainbow, broken lute, mute spirit, ruined cell, dead seaman, bier of love, storm-rocked ravens, wintry sky, rotting rafters, falling leaves, cold wind).

The high concentration of images does not impress one as being artificial because they seem to flow quite naturally. It is the easier to believe in that spontaneousness on account of the logical lapses

mentioned above and still more on account of the simple, unaffected colloquial intonation of the whole poem.

The metrical stresses coincide with the stresses that would fall on the same words in ordinary speech. This is the case in 21 out of the 32 lines of the poem; this gives it an easy and natural flow. In the remaining 11 lines, where that natural flow is impeded by repeated heavy spondees, the weakening of the metrical scheme has the effect of utter freedom of versification, of freedom from the shackles of verse and of spontaneous feeling breaking through metrical restrictions. As a matter of fact, this occurs in one line of the 1st, descriptive and restrained, stanza, in the most emotionally laden line, by the way: "Loved accents|are soon|forgot". In ordinary speech we would stress: $\underline{\text{L}} \text{OVED} | \text{a} \text{CCENTS} | \text{a} \text{RE} \text{SOON} | \text{fo} \text{GOT}$. Now the metre requires no stress on *loved*, i. e. $\underline{\text{O}} \text{VED} | \text{a} \text{CCENTS} | \text{a} \text{RE} \text{SOON} | \text{fo} \text{GOT}$. The same is repeated in two lines of the 2nd and 3rd stanzas (the third and eighth lines of the 2nd stanza, the second and fifth lines of the 3rd) and in six lines (all but the first and fourth) of the last and most intensely tragic stanza.

The natural intonation of a spoken confession, painful and passionate, is kept up by Shelley observing the direct and ordinary word-order. The exceptions are "Sweet tones are remembered not", "Music and splendour survive not the lamp and the lute" and "Why choose you the frailest?" Two of them are due to omission of the auxiliary verb *do* in negative and interrogative sentences, which is common in old ballads and songs and does not sound bookish or artificial. The only inversion *proprement dite* is the one in the final stanza:

From thy nest every rafter
Will rot.

But in this case it agrees well with the general feeling of disruption, of shattered life and hope and with the strongest shift in metre, as has been demonstrated above. The inverted word-order seems therefore natural here. The spontaneous quality of Shelley's poetry is, as has been pointed out, largely due to his versification. In the present poem it is as daring as ever.

Each of the four stanzas consists of two quatrains, with the rhyme-system *a b a b c d c d*, with feminine and masculine rhymes in strict alternation. Each line is composed of a complex pattern of iambic and anapaest lines, the metrical scheme very loose and entirely original, more free even than that adopted by Coleridge. Shelley varies the number of syllables. Thus, in the first and third lines of all stanzas the number of syllables is uniformly six, the only exception being the last quatrain of the last stanza where it is seven. In the second and fourth lines the number of syllables varies from seven in the 1st stanza to eight and seven in the 2nd, from seven, eight and nine in the 3rd to nine, eight and seven in the 4th.

The number of stresses is fairly uniform, namely two stresses in the first and third lines, and three stresses in the second and fourth lines — with the exception of the above mentioned eleven lines where extra stresses, spondees, appear when required by the intonation of the spoken language.

If the total number of syllables and of stresses is with obvious deviations adhered to throughout the poem, the distribution and interaction of stressed and unstressed syllables vary freely from stanza to stanza and, one might almost say, from line to line. Only in four cases out of sixteen (namely in the first and third lines of both quatrains of the 1st and 3rd stanzas) is the interrelation of stressed and unstressed syllables the same. But it is never the same in second and fourth lines of any stanza.

Together with the strict observance of the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes, one might be justified in saying that there is enough uniformity to give the impression of metrical structure, of a rhythmical and melodious pattern — and enough variety for a sense of unfettered motion.

To sum up the comments to both texts, it should be pointed out that in Shelley's poetry the romantic revolt against things established, against set social laws, against hard and fast lines regulating matters of conscience, opinion and taste reaches its highest peak. His are a readiness to sacrifice self in the service of a great human purpose, a nobility and refinement of feeling, a daring of idea, expression and verse that have not been surpassed in English poetry. He might truly be called the Prometheus of his century.

ODE TO THE WEST WIND

(1819)

I

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

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

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

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

II

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

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

Of some fierce Maenad,¹ even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

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

III

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

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's² bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

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

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice,³ and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

¹ Maenad — a priestess of the God of wine (Bacchus)

² Baiae — a beautiful ancient coastal town near Naples. As it is not far from Vesuvius Shelley calls the island in its bay a "pumice" — that is, a volcanic — isle.

³ The sea blooms... know thy voice... — Shelley means that sea weeds feel the wind blowing on the surface of the sea

If I were a dead leaf thou mowers,
 If I were a swift cloud to fly with-
 A wave to pant beneath thy power,

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

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

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

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

V

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

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

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

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

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

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. Point out the central symbol of the poem. Discuss it in the light of Shelley's revolutionary outlook and his pantheistic conception of nature.
2. Trace the development of Shelley's symbols, the associations giving rise to new symbols and metaphors.

3. Analyse the structure of the poem. Can it be said to consist of five sonnets? What is the subject of each of them and how do they interact?

4. What is the metre of the poem? How does Shelley manipulate the long line? What is its effect? Discuss the closing lines of every section and their role.

5. To whom and what does Shelley liken the Wind? Which similes strike you most? How do they reflect the poet's views?

6. When and how does the poet introduce his own self? Why does he compare himself to the Wind? What are the requests he addresses to the Wind? Explain the poet's attitude.

7. Point out the lines revealing the poet's suffering. What figure of speech is employed here and with what effect?

8. Comment on Shelley's imagery, its sources, variety, richness. Do you consider it easy to understand? Is it characteristic of romantic poetry?

9. Explain the metaphor "the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean".

10. What figurative representation of clouds does Shelley give in the second part?

TO JANE

(1822)

I

The keen stars were twinkling,
And the fair moon was rising among them,
Dear Jane!

The guitar was tinkling,
But the notes were not sweet till you sung them
Again.

II

As the moon's soft splendour
O'er the faint cold starlight of Heaven
Is thrown,
So your voice most tender
To the strings without soul had then given
Its own.

III

The stars will awaken,
Though the moon sleep a full hour later,
To-night;
No leaf will be shaken
Whilst the dews of your melody scatter
Delight.

IV

Though the sound overpowers,
Sing again, with your dear voice revealing
A tone
Of some world far from ours,
Where music and moonlight and feeling
Are one.

QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. What are the devices rendering the impression of music and song?
 2. Discuss Shelley's images based on the senses of sight and hearing. Which of them prevail?
 3. Explain the metaphor "the dews of your melody scatter delight".
 4. What words constantly recur in all the four stanzas?
 5. Give examples of alliteration. Name its purpose.
 6. Characterize the metre of the poem.
 7. Are there many bookish, high-flown words in the poem? What are they, if any?
 8. Are there any lines that betray a feeling deeper than delight in music?
 9. Which of them would you call unexpected and out of the ordinary?
-

John Keats

(Born 1795 — Died 1821)

A romantic of the younger generation, like Shelley and Byron, Keats was also one of the rebels against the stiff social, moral and esthetic canons of his time. He differed from the senior writers, however, in his belief that poetry should not be made a direct expression of political creeds, necessarily temporary and changing, but should strive to give scope to eternal passions and to beauty. That beauty, Keats feared, could not be found in contemporary existence but only in a world created by the poet, a world taking in the loveliness of nature, of truly noble feeling and the joy of life and altruism which bourgeois civilization was destroying.

That is why for about three quarters of a century after Keats's belated recognition (like Shelley and unlike Byron, he was not acknowledged in his life-time) he was looked upon as an apostle of beauty, as an early exponent of the "art for art's sake" theory, as a predecessor of late 19th century esthetes like Swinburne (see below). But Keats never sought beauty for beauty's sake. He sought it because he wished to set up an ethical and esthetical ideal denying the false values of his period.

Discovery of beauty was to Keats a discovery of the essence, of the core of things which, he felt sure, must be beautiful, even if they are often corrupted by circumstances. It was therefore a way of learning the truth about reality and not an attempt to find beauty independent of reality, in the way it was done by the poets belonging to the esthetic schools of the late 19th century.

In the poet's eyes, Keats said,

The Husk of natural objects opens quite
To the core and every secret essence there
Reveals the elements of good and fair,
Making him see where learning has no light.

(*The Poet*, 1818)

The process of discovering a new poetic world is graphically described in one of Keats's earlier lyrics — the sonnet of 1818 *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* (i. e. Homer in the translation of George Chapman, a 16th century poet):

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,¹
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands² have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;³
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez⁴ when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific — and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise —
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.⁵

Keats wrote several poems derived from Greek mythology — *Endymion* (1817), a symbolic tale of a poet's quest for beauty, *Hyperion* (1818/19), on the titans deposed by Olympian gods, an allegory of the complex evolution of history involving constant change and sacrifice: the titans are great and noble but they must yield to the superiority of the new deities. Here is the description of the aged titan Saturn, who has been dethroned and is now passing his days in mournful solitude. It is the beginning of *Hyperion*:

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat gray hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair;
Forest on forest hung about his head
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade, the Naiad 'mid her reeds,
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.
Along the margins and large foot-marks went,
No further than to where his foot had stray'd,
And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead;
Unceptred; and his realmless eyes were closed;
While his bow'd head seem'd listening to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

¹ realms of gold — *here*: the realms of great poetry

² By "western islands" Keats means the works of famous English poets.

³ demesne — realm

⁴ Keats mistakes Cortez for Balboa, discoverer of the Pacific Ocean.

⁵ Darien — the old name for the Isthmus of Panama, linking North America with South America

His other poems are inspired by the literature of the Italian and English Renaissance (*Isabella, or the Pot of Basil. A story from Boccaccio*, 1818; *The Eve of Saint Agnes*, 1819, etc.).

The peak of Keats's art are the odes and sonnets he wrote in 1819, his last creative year. Tuberculosis first put an end to his work, when he was barely 24, and then to his life.

His death was lamented in one of the finest of English elegies, Shelley's *Adonais* (1821):

XXXIX

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep —
He hath awakened from the dream of life —
Tis we, who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings — We decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

XL

He has outwared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

XLI

He lives, he wakes — 'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais — Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease, ye saint flowers, and fountains, and thou Air,
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

XLII

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the mean
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own,
Which wields the world with never-weary'd love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

This is the finest tribute a poet ever paid to a poet.

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

(1819)

1.

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards¹ had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness, —
That thou, light-winged Dryad² of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

2.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delv'd earth,
Tasting of Flora³ and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song,⁴ and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,⁵
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

3.

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;

¹ Lethe — the river from which the dead were supposed to drink so as to forget earthly life before they entered Elysium, the paradise of Greek mythology

² Dryad — a wood nymph (*myth.*)

³ Flora — Goddess of flowers and the spring (*myth.*)

⁴ Provençal song — from Provence, a Southern province of France renowned in the Middle Ages for the love songs of its poets (*troubadours*)

⁵ Hippocrene — according to Greek mythology, a source whose waters inspired poets

Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

4.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus¹ and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards;
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

5.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalm'd darkness, guess—each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

6.

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

¹ Bacchus — God of wine in Greek mythology; his chariot was supposed to be drawn by leopards (pards)

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
 No hungry generations tread thee down;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown:¹
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
 Through the sad heart of Ruth,² when, sick for home,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

8.

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

COMMENTS

The structure of the poem is conditioned by a complicated development of thought and feeling, by swift transitions from despair and longing for death to keen enjoyment of beauty and back again to despair.

Keats's Nightingale is summer and joy incarnate. The poem is based on strong contrast between the beautiful world the Nightingale belongs to, as given in stanzas 2, 4, 5, 7, and the world of weariness, fever and fret where

...men sit and hear each other groan...
 Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
 And leaden-eyed despairs.

This is the world as it is, and it deeply hurts the poet. He wants to forget, to escape from it, but he knows there is really no escape

¹ clown — here: country-fellow

² Ruth — a character in the Bible. She left her own country and was lonely in a strange land where she gathered grain from stalks of corn left behind by the reapers.

from harsh realities. It is just because Keats cannot forget the misery of men, and it haunts him in spite of the visions of happiness and beauty invoked by the Nightingale's song, that he is a great poet. That is why his descriptions of the joyous world of the Nightingale are permeated with sadness, whereas the stanzas devoted to the heartache that is inseparable from humanity are touched with beauty emanating from the bird's song. It is the conflict between the longing for oblivion and for the unblemished beauty of nature and love on the one hand and a painful realization of the futility of escape on the other hand that makes for the dramatic tension of the Ode. The shift from the one to the other determines the movement of the poem and its contradictory moods, giving it a likeness to a debate. It is not a debate of intellectual conceptions, though, but of states of mind reflecting the two main tendencies of Keats's art: the search of ideal beauty in poetry abstracted from reality and the earnest desire to serve men by writing about "the agony and strife of human hearts" (*Sleep and Poetry*, 1816).

The shift between conflicting states of mind is generally introduced with each new stanza of the poem. The first displays the main contrast underlying the ode: the heartache, the drowsy numbness of the poet and the gladness of the singing bird, which after a while thrills the poet and makes him share the happiness of the Nightingale.

The central contrast involves secondary ones, for instance, that between the heavy heart of the poet and the light wings of the bird. At this point comes the unexpected turn towards the 2nd stanza. The poet now wants to join the bird in its green home and share in its gladness at any cost, even if he has to drink wine to do so.

The associations suggested by wine are very close to those suggested by the song of the Nightingale: both include summer, green trees, warmth, but the 2nd stanza adds to these "the country-green", Flora, "dance"; "Provençal song", "sunburnt mirth", "warm South". Here too a sort of secondary contrast arises between the cool wine and the warm South.

The transition from the 2nd to the 3rd stanza is again very abrupt. Here Keats enumerates all the things he would like to forget. If the 2nd stanza develops the part of the contrast that is embodied in the Nightingale, the 3rd takes up the other part, the one that is expressed in the description of the poet's melancholy. This is to say, both the 2nd and 3rd stanzas unfold the different aspects of the contrasting theme set by the 1st and are therefore opposed to one another. Within the 3rd a minor contrast arises — between "lead-eyed" and "lustrous eyes".

The 4th stanza begins by refuting the preceding one ("Away! away!"). Keats no longer thinks of rejoining the Nightingale in a chariot driven by Bacchus; he prefers the "viewless wings of Poesy". In the middle of the stanza there is a break: the wish that has just

been expressed is granted ("Already with thee!"). The conflict subsidiary to the central one is that of the splendour of the sky and the gloom on earth.

The 5th stanza might be taken for a digression if it did not deepen the conflict between the green world of the Nightingale and that of men. All the details of Keats's descriptions here are antithetical (e. g. the "fast-fading violets" — and "the coming musk-rose"). Keats delineates the present, past and future of every phenomenon. Therefore, though the rose is the child of May, the poet imagines it as "the murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves".

A fresh antithesis is introduced in the 6th stanza. From keen enjoyment of nature the poet turns to thoughts of death. His anxious expectation of death affords a rich contrast to the ecstasy of the bird; in the 7th stanza the mortality of the poet is contrasted to the immortality of song. The latter is associated with past history, with the biblical tale of Ruth and with fantastic visions of fairy-lands and seas.

The 8th stanza sums up the debate and brings us back to the starting-point — to the suffering self of the poet. The contrast between his deep sadness — and his preceding delight with the Nightingale's melodies is revealed in the abrupt change from the high poetic to the plainer

— the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fabled to do, deceiving elf.

This final stanza echoes many elements of the preceding ones: the "ecstasy" of the Nightingale (6) becomes "plaintive" and "fades", whereas before it was the poet himself who wanted "to fade" in the darkness of night and forest. Once again a sort of derivative contrast appears: in dying, the song alternately rises ("up the hill-side") or descends ("is buried deep in the next valley-glades"); it hurries "past the near meadows" and "over the still stream". The succession of adverbs (*up, deep, past, over*), the frequent and heavy ponders — "Past the | near mead | owa, o | ver the | still stream" (— 0 | — — | 0 — | 0 0 | — —), "next val | ley-glades" (— — | 0 —) and numerous inversions render the uneven movements of the flying bird.

The poem reflects the divided mind of the poet. It is born out of a great emotional stress. For that reason the intensity of the author's mood pervades the world round him: we hear of a night that is "tender", of "careful death", of "fairy lands forlorn". The same intensity gives rise to images suggested by different senses. Thus, the place from which the Nightingale's voice issues becomes a "melodious plot", darkness is "embalmed", incense "hangs upon the boughs", light is "with the breezes blown", and mirth is "sun-burnt". All things are presented as they act on several senses: the musk-rose, for example, has an odour, a taste and, as it were, a

voice; for Keats dwells on the humming of summer-flies drinking the dew that has fallen upon it. The voice makes itself heard with the help of the m-alliteration:

And mid May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose,¹

Characters from the Bible, from ancient Rome and from fairy-lands all share the intense and passionate feeling aroused by the voice of the Nightingale. A fine instance of the gradual unfolding of a series of complex associations can be found in the 2nd stanza, where a "draught of vintage" is associated with "deep-delved earth", with Flora and the country green with song and mirth. Keats's romantic imagination gives a new sense to traditional classical allusions. The Dryad becomes a Nightingale, Flora has a definite taste ("tasting of Flora"), Hippocrene blushes ("blushful"). The epithet is unclassical in its strangeness, standing as it does for the more common "blushing". The classical Lethe is given a peculiar colouring by the suffix *-wards* ("Lethe-wards"). The numerous physical and material details Keats is so keen about are unclassical too: violets are not just "sweet", or "modest", or "retiring" as they would be in a classical poem, but "fast-fading violets covered up in leaves"; the "beechen" are not merely green but also throw "shadows numberless".

Unclassical, too, in its intensity and concentration is the wealth of Keats's imagery: metaphors like "full-throated ease", "sunburnt mirth", "murmurous haunt of flies", "mused rhyme", "beaded bubbles", "verdurous glooms", "loaden-eyed despair" require full-length sentences in the prose speech of everyday.

Keats calls his poem an Ode. Like his fellow-romantics, he gave this word a different interpretation from that common to classic poetry. With the romantics it is not a solemn poem on a grand occasion, but a poem on an ordinary subject elevated to the rank of lofty poetry. Thus, in Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* (see p. 151) the wind had been the pretext for a poetic outburst wherein the personal and social elements mingle so as to be indivisible. In the ode of Keats the social tendencies are, in accordance with the poet's artistic creed, much less distinct. Nevertheless, their presence can hardly be questioned and is to be felt in the author's sorrowful reflections.

The versification of the romantic ode not only differs from that of the ode in ancient poetry, but from its classical 18th century imitations. Shelley's is, contrary to previous usage, written in "terza rima" and consists of parts reminiscent of sonnets. With Keats each

¹ Alliteration and assonance give a voice to the bell:

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!

The sounds l, t, h, a, o, e tune these lines and make them bell-like.

stanza is composed of a definite number of pentameter lines with one rhyme-scheme for all of them: *a b a b c d e c d e*. This structure reminds one of a reduced sonnet, lacking only the second quatrain to be complete. The metre is strictly uniform with the single exception of the eighth line. It consists of three feet instead of five and generally has the effect of arresting the reader's attention, as, for instance, in the case of "And purple-stained mouth", "And leaden-eyed despairs", "But here there is no light", "In such an ecstasy". This irregularity that becomes regular from repetition contributes to the musicality of the ode and helps to render the contradictory complexity of its movement, of its conflicts and contrasts.

BRIGHT STAR

(1819)

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art —
 Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
 And watching, with eternal lids apart,
 Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,
 The moving waters at their priestlike task
 Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
 Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
 Of snow upon the mountains and the moors —
 No — yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
 Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
 To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
 Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
 Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
 And so live ever — or else swoon to death.

COMMENTS

The date of the first draft of this poem is uncertain; probably it belongs to the spring of 1819, to the period of Keats's highest achievement. The poet subsequently introduced changes and improvements, the final revision being made on his way to Italy and dated September 28th, 1820. As Keats was never to return from that voyage, the sonnet was long known as "His Last Sonnet" until recent research helped to date it more accurately.

The sonnet seems to be merely an utterance of love and longing. And yet it is written in such a way as to encompass the whole world, both earth and sky, from the solitary star apostrophized by the poet to the breath of his mistress. Sensual, human passion is ennobled by suffering, by readiness to die, and by the comparison of the lover and the bright star. The star is described with the same sensuous concreteness as the poet's mistress. Despite the cosmic

grandeur of the description there is also room for a perfectly earthly landscape, with new snow lying on hill and dale.

With Keats's characteristic use of dramatic contrast the cold of night and winter is opposed to the warmth of love, the dispassionate gaze of the star — to the passion of the poet, the sleeplessness of the star — to the happy sleep of the lovers. A contrast of life and death completes the poem. The symbol of the star reigns supreme through it all.

The lover who appeals to stars, moon and sky as witnesses of his yearning or his rapture is a very trivial figure. But Keats is not just an ordinary lover, and the star is no mere poetic convention: it carries out the loftiest of functions, it mounts guard over the great world of man, it partakes of the earth, — just as the lover who compares himself to it, partakes of heaven.

The connection between them is conveyed by intonational, syntactic and lexical means. The poem seems to be one long breath. It presents one period, one syntactic unity whose parts are interrelated through the opening simile ("Bright star! Would I were steadfast as thou art.") and through words that seem to echo each other in both parts of the simile: "steadfast" occurs in the first and ninth lines; in both parts words denoting immutability are repeated: "eternal", "for ever", "still". And in both parts of the sonnet, although the poet stresses immobility, there is everlasting change, movement, an everlasting *Warden* (coming into being). The waters move around earth's human shores, the breast of the sleeping girl rises and falls, it has only begun to ripen ("ripening breast"), and the snow has only just stopped falling ("new soft-fallen snow"). There is a parallel between the fall of the snow and the fall of the girl's breast. This parallel is important, for passion is purged by this association with the purity of the new snow.

The union of immobility and movement is rendered by means of Participial and Infinitive forms: not one verb is given in its more dynamic finite form. The action is expressed mainly by participles (*moving, fallen, ripening, tender-taken*) and nouns (*fall, spell, ablution*). Even the abstract noun *ablution* is a kind of action arrested in its movement.

The immobility of this world is therefore a seeming one: its eternity and immutability is really an eternity of motion, an eternity of change. The breath of love is as continuous and as natural as the soft movement of the waters of the world's great Ocean, as the soft fall of snow. Paradoxically, the central comparison of star and poet appears more of a contrast and keeps up only the formal structure of a simile. Paradoxically, too, steadfastness is more emphasized in the second, erotic part of the poem. In the first it is expressed only by "steadfast", "eternal", "patient", in the second — by "steadfast", "unchangeable", "for ever" (twice), "ever", "still" (three times). An emotion whose very nature, it would seem, is to