CHAPTER 7

THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY

If we are to understand and enjoy all that good poems offer us, we should know what to look for - the special language devices including a unified pattern of words that are being used to create a special kind of sense, to communicate a very specific meaning. Poetry has such a language of its own, the language of poetry which tells us more than ordinary language does. It has more to offer to our ears - we can be pleased or charmed or excited by listening to its sounds. It has more to offer to our senses-it gives us things that we can imagine as if we were there to see, hear, or touch them. It has more to offer to our minds-it makes us think and feel. Thus, The language of poetry is richer, more suggestive and more powerful than the language of prose. (Guth, 1981, P.683)

For example, when Frost says.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near,

We immediately sense the language of poetry, not of science or history, because of the devices of rhythm, (iambic tetrameter) rhyme, (queer-near), figurative language (a horse that thinks) and symbol (a horse that stands for practical sense as against the impractical sense of the driver). The following are important devices in the language of poetry :

figurative language

simile

metaphor

personification

symbol

allusion

metonymy

synecdoche

allegory

apostrophe

Figurative Language or Figures of Speech

If we are to catch all the meanings the poet tries to convey, we need to go beyond the denotation of a poet' s words, go beyond The plain literal meaning of a word. If we note only a word's denotation and fail to go beyond to perceive its connotations as well, we miss a great deal; but if we fail to go beyond the literal meaning of a word used figuratively in other word, we misread the figures of speech completely. One of the necessary abilities for reading poetry is the ability to interpret figurative language. Every use of figurative language involves a risk of misinterpretation. Robert Frost has said, "poetry provides the one permissible way of saying one thing and meaning another“. This suggests the importance of figurative language. A poem is complex, each of its component features helps to convey meaning. (Dickinson, 1959, pp.52-53)

A figure of speech is a way of saying something other than the literal way. It adds extra dimensions to language and reveals one thing by relating it to something else.

Figures of speech have three main functions: They provide pleasure; they are illustrative, particularly if the writer wishes to enable the reader to understand an abstract concept They are an essential means of interpreting experience. Hardly any poem is devoid of figurative language and many poems make extensive use of it.

In short, figurative language or figures of speech are words and expressions used out of their literal sense to give vividness to writing and suggest pictures and images.

The most common *figures of speech* are the following:

simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole or overstatement or exaggeration, understatement or litotes or meiosis, symbol, synecdoche, metonymy, paradox, allusion apostrophe, allegory, irony, and etc.

Simile

A simile is a comparison between two things which, in most respects, are totally unlike, but which actually are alike in some significant way. The word 'simile' only means: like. When the poet uses a simile he makes it plain to the reader that he is using a comparison between things normally regarded as unlike each other. Similes generally use the words: 'like', 'as', 'as though', 'as if', as…as, as…so, than, or by a verb such as 'resembles', 'appears', or seems: in the comparison. (Elder, 2004, p.292) Let us look at a few examples:

The poet Wordsworth described a beautiful woman as:

> Fair as a star, When only one
> Is shining in the sky.

The comparison is between the beauty of a single bright star shining in the sky and the beauty of the woman which shines out above that of other women.

Shakespeare, thinking of the passing of time and the shortness of life said:

> Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
> So do our minutes hasten to their end.

He thought of the minutes of life following one another like waves that roll in succession towards the shore.

Another poet, thinking about the inconstancy of life, said:

> This life which seems so fair,
> Is like a bubble blow up in the air
> By sporting children's breath
> Who chase it everywhere

So just as the bubble is at the mercy of the children who are blowing it here and there, our lives are at the mercy of forces that are often beyond our control.

Burns in his song:

> My luve is like a red, red rose
> That's newly sprung in June:
> My luve is like the melodie
> That's sweetly played in tune.

"Like a red, red rose" is a simile, a form of metaphor, comparing one thing to another. Burns is describing a Scottish girl. Thinking of her fresh beauty and "redness"-perhaps it is her mouth he is thinking of –he thinks of the redness of a rose.

Metaphor

In metaphor, the comparison is implied between two seemingly dissimilar things by saying that one of them is the other, but the comparison is more subtle, more compressed and less obvious. The comparison used in metaphor is a direct one; that is the figurative term is substituted for the literal term. (Elder, 2004, p.292)

Unlike a simile, a metaphor does not use 'like', 'as', 'as…as' and so on. The poet makes the readers see the similarity between two objects usually considered different and therefore makes the reader see and think in a new way. The poet does not say that one object is like another; he says it is another. For example, to describe a very tense situation one could use a simile: 'like playing with dynamite'; a metaphor; 'it' s dynamite'.

Another example, "life is a play" is a metaphor in which play is substituted for life. A simile would say 'life is like a play'. When Tennyson writes that the eagle

"Clasps the crag with crooked hands" he is using a metaphor for he substitutes crooked hands for claws. Later when he says that the eagle falls

"like a thunderbolts he falls" he uses a simile.

Again, when Shakespeare said:

All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players,

He was comparing the world to a stage and all the people in it to actors. You will notice that he did not say,

'All the world's like a stage', but stated the comparison directly; 'All the world's a stage'. Macbeth, thinking of the shortness and inconstancy of life, says;

Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more

To Macbeth at this time life has no more reality than a moving shadow on a wall; he feels it is like a bad actor who plays the small part he has been given very badly and then leaves the stage and is never seen there again.

Another poet, struck by the varied beauty of a woman's face, says:

There is a garden in her face
Where roses and white lilies grow.

To him the beauties of the woman's face appear to be like flowers in a garden.

The poet Wordsworth, looking at the great city of London in the early morning when everything is quiet, still and unmoving, says

Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

The great city is compared to a heart. A great city like London flow the commerce and the communications that give life to a nation just as the heart sends blood through the arteries and veins to other parts of the body.

Examples of analyzed poetry:

Dreams

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

Source : (Wolfe, et.al, 1977, p.61)

This poem contains two metaphors, in lines 3 - 4 and 7 - 8, used to add concrete detail to the abstract term 'dream', which here has the meaning of hope for a better future.

All the World's a Stage

All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms,
And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel,
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts

Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

William Shakespeare, As You Like It, 2. Vii (1564 - 1616)

Source : (Miller, & Slote, 1962, pp.192-193)

In this poem, the persona makes a judgment on life. The metaphor comparing life to a play and men and women to the actors is extended throughout the whole speech, with each age group being compared to a character in a play. Within this extended metaphor are minor metaphors (lines 14 and 22) and similes (lines 8, 10, 12). All the distinguishing features of the seven ages are unpleasant: The infant is ill, the schoolboy is unhappy, the lover is sad, the soldier risks his life to seek a reputation for bravery which will soon be forgotten, the justice is corrupt, the old man is thin and cannot see well, and extreme old age is senile and helpless. This is a biased picture of life, spoken by a confirmed pessimist.

Sonnet 73

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day

As after sunset fadeth in the west,
hich by-and-by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
n me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
s the death bed whereon it must expire,
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
    This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Source : (Miller, & Slote, 1962, p.180)

This poem is divided into three major metaphorical statements of one idea and a concluding and summarizing couplet. The first major metaphor, in lines 1-4, compares the speaker's age and situation to autumn. It contains within itself a minor metaphor (line 4) in which the leafless trees are compared to the churches which Henry VIII destroyed. The second metaphor (lines 5-8) compares the speaker to evening, which will shortly be replaced by night. A minor metaphor is found in line 8 where night is compared to death ('death's second self'). The third major metaphor, in lines 9-12, compares the speaker to a fire which is burning low and almost out. There is a simile within this metaphor (line 11), where the ashes are compared to a deathbed. There are also two examples of personification, lines 7, where night is a thief stealing the light, and 10, where the fire is a dying person. All three metaphors have in common the suggestion of approaching death. These metaphors combine to illustrate the speaker's approaching death, and to explain the conclusion in the

couplet: that the speaker's mistress will love him with an even greater love because he will soon die.

Personification

A special form of metaphor, a non - human thing, an object, animal, or idea, is referred to as if it were human having the characteristics of a human. The device whereby an abstract term (e.g. death), an inanimate object (e.g. money), or a force in the natural world (e.g. the sea) is spoken of as though it were a person. It is closely related to metaphor because it is an implied comparison in which the figurative true term of the comparison is a human being. (Guth, 1981, p.684)

For example, if we say:

The sun smiled on the earth…..

we are speaking of the sun as though it is capable of smiling like the human face. We are actually comparing the goodness, benevolence and warmth of the sun's rays that fall upon the earth to the kindly and warm smile that a parent might give to a child, for example. When a character in one of Shakespeare's plays talks of sleep and calls it:

O sleep! Nature's sweet nurse…..

he is comparing the way in which sleep helps to cure us of our illnesses and worries to the way in which a nurse looks after a sick person.

In "**The Eagle**" **Alfred Lord Tennyson** personifies the eagle and the sea as human by using the words "he", 'hands' and "crawls"

"Flowers and plants, nations, the earth, the moon, the sun, the stars are often treated this way in poetry. Poets often talk of flowers and waves 'dancing'. The poet Shelley talks of the earth as 'dancing around the sun' and refers to the moon as the 'orbed maiden with white fire laden'. Another poet said, 'The night has a thousand eyes and the day but one'. In all these examples, non-human things are referred to as having some of the characteristics of a human or as being human beings".(Murphy, 1980, p.33)

Abstract ideas such as justice, laughter, mercy, beauty, love, honour and duty are often personified. Love is often referred to as being 'blind'.

When the poet Wordsworth came upon a great number of beautiful flowers waving in the breeze he said;

Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

Examples of analyzed poetry:

Tree At My Window

Tree at my window, window tree,
My sash is lowered when night comes on;
But let there never be curtain drawn
Between you and me.

Vague dream-head lifted out of the ground,
And thing next most diffuse to cloud,
Not all your light tongues talking aloud.
Could be profound.

But, tree, I have seen you taken and tossed,
And if you have seen me when I slept,
You have seen me when I was taken and swept
And all but lost.

That day she put our heads together,
Fate had her imagination about her,
Your head so much concerned with outer,
Mine with inner, weather.

Robert Frost, 1874-1963

Source : (Cavanaugh, 1974, pp.170-171)

This poem personifies the tree - it has a head, it talks aloud, it thinks ('your head so much concerned with outer……weather'). Fate is also personified as a woman who deliberately planned the juxtaposition of man and tree ('Fate had her imagination about her'). The personification of the tree enables the poet to make a comparison between his mental life and that of the tree (lines 9-12, 15-16)

…………Because I could not stop for death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility………….

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Source : (Cavanaugh, 1974, pp.180-181)

Death, in a section of a longer poem, is personified as a well-mannered gentleman with a carriage calling at the woman's house to take her for a ride. As it is impossible for any living person to have experienced death, death is almost always dealt with in figurative language. In this way a difficult abstract concept can be made understandable.

Symbol

A symbol is very important in poetry. A symbol is something concrete that stands for something abstract. It contains in itself or suggests the qualities that it is meant to symbolize. It may appear simple but it stands for something complex. It represents both itself and one or more other meanings. (Murphy, 1980, pp.66-68)

Symbols are sometimes divided into public or private contextual symbols. A public symbol is one on which all people agree to the meaning. For example, the cross symbolizes Christianity, the flag symbolizes a country. A skull symbolizes death, the dove symbolizes peace, a journey symbolizes a course of life. The heart symbolizes love. The 'crown' symbolizes the state, and the government. The crown symbolizes the king or 'queen's authority. Also, when people talk about the Russian bear, the Chinese dragon, the British lion, they are using these animals as symbols of these countries. The flowing water suggests time and eternity; a voyage suggests life. A symbol is a private of contextual if it has no habitually agreed meaning behind it. Its meaning is apparent only to the poet, and to the reader if the poet has explained the symbol in the poem. For example, the city of Byzantium is used as a private symbol in Yeat's poetry. Its meaning for Yeats can only be discovered by reading his poetry.

Stephen Crane used symbols to represent abstract ideas, as in

"I saw a man pursuing the horizon."

The horizon symbolizes goals that can never be reached. Or in

"A man saw **a ball of gold** in the sky;
He climbed for it,
And eventually he achieved it____
It was clay

The **"ball of gold"** is a symbol for our illusions: Here Crane wants to make the point that people sometimes choose to hold on to pleasant illusions rather than accept unpleasant realities.

When **Robert Herrick** says in his poem "**Daffodils**":

Fair daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attained its noon,

He is not only talking about the daffodils, beautiful, short-lived flowers that bloom briefly in the springtime, but also about life. The flower which blooms, then quickly dies, becomes a symbol of life.

In European poetry many things are used as symbols. The moon is often a symbol of beauty, and also of inconstancy because it is always changing shape. Snow can be a symbol of purity; and the seasons – spring, summer, autumn, winter-symbols of the ages of life, viz. childhood, youth, maturity and old age. Light and dark become symbols of goodness and evil,

James Shirley, thinking about death, the great leveler which spares no one, wrote:

An excerpt from: "The Glories of Our Blood and State"

There is no armour against fate;
Death lays his icy hand on kings.
Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

James Shirley (1596-1666)

Source : (Perrine, 1963, p.298)

'Scepter and crown' are symbols of the power of the rulers of the land. 'Scythe and spade', two common farming implements, are symbols of the poor, common, working man. So the poet is saying that death makes no distinction but, in the end, reduces both the highest and the lowest in the land to the equality of dust.

The most common public symbols used in English poetry:

Time / Seasons

spring	birth, youth
summer	maturity, vigor
autumn	fruition, aging
winter	death, desolation
dawn	birth, enlightenment
morning	youth, optimism
noon	adulthood
evening	dying, old age
night	death, the unknown, desolation

Colours

white	purity, innocence, sickness
red	sexuality, anger, passion
purple	royalty, riches
black	death, sorrow, evil
green	youth, childhood

Human World

town	rationality, order, restraint
journey, road	the course of life
fireplace	security
stage	the human condition
bread	food for the body
walls	cultural, religious, political barriers between men
crown	kingship
golden ring	the union of marriage
lion	strength and courage
dove	peace
tree	life

In English poetry there are many references to the myths and legends of ancient Greece and Rome. Many references are to the gods and goddesses of ancient times. Here is a short list of classical references (Murphy, 1980, pp.89-90)

Zeus/Jupiter/Jove	The father of all the gods.
Juno/Hera	The wife of Jove.
Apollo/Phoebus	The god of the sun.
Mars/Aries	The god of war.
Mercury/Hermes	The messenger of the gods. Pictured wearing a winged helmet and with wings on his heels.
Neptune/Poseidon	The god of the sea. Pictured as a bearded man carrying a three-pronged spear or trident.

Pan	The god of the forest and lonely places. Pictured as half man and half goat. Is said to be connected with the origins of music, i.e. The Pipes of Pan.
Pluto/Dis	The god of the underworld where the shades of the dead dwell.
Diana/Artermis	Goddess of the moon. Protector of maidens. Pictured as a huntress with a bow and dogs.
Venus/Aphrodite	The goddess of love and beauty.
Cupid/Eros	The god of love. Generally pictured as blind or blindfolded, and as a small winged boy with bow and arrows. There is a famous statue of Eros in Piccadilly Circus, London.
Ceres/Demeter	The goddess of crops and of agriculture.
Bacchus	The god of wine, drinking and revelry.

In fact, most of the common natural phenomena as well as domestic objects such as bread, wine, salt and fruit can be used as symbols, though exactly what they symbolize is not constant and varies with the context. The symbols are concrete, they have shape: the thing that is symbolized is not concrete; it is an abstraction, an idea of the reader with the mind of the poet.

In poetry the symbol should be understood from the poem itself. A successful symbol in a poem should be able to convey a meaning to the reader directly. The poet uses a symbol because it gives his idea a concrete shape which, without explanation, unites the understanding.

Examples of analyzed poetry:

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
On, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Source : (Miller, & Slote, 1962, pp.652-653)

This poem is an uncomplicated illustration of a public symbol. The entire situation is symbolic, as is made clear in the last verse. The line 'And that has made all the difference' forces the reader to see a significance Thus the poem is about the nature of choice, and the necessity for making a choice, despite the possible regret that the choice may cause.

merely roads; the walk not merely a walk. A diverging road symbolizes choice.

Fire and Ice

Some say the world will end in fire.
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Source : (Miller, & Slote, 1962, p.658)

In this poem Frost directly identifies the symbols in lines 3 and 6. Lines 1-2 are a reference to currently opposing scientific theories of the probable end of the world: some scientists believe the earth will be drawn closer to the sun and burn up; others that as the sun grows colder the earth will freeze. Frost uses this reference as a metaphor for the destruction of man who may be destroyed (physically, mentally or emotionally) by either desire or hate: by either fire or ice.

The Owl

Downhill I came, hungry, and yet not starved;
Cold, yet had heat within me that was proof
Against the North wind; tired, yet so that rest
Had seemed the sweetest thing under a roof.

Then at the inn I had food, fire, and rest,
Knowing how hungry, cold, and tired was I.
All of the night was quite barred out except
An owl's cry, a most melancholy cry

Shaken out long and clear upon the hill,
No merry note, nor cause of merriment,
But one telling me plain what I escaped
And others could not, that night, as in I went.

And salted was my food, and my repose,
Salted and sobered, too, by the bird's voice
Speaking for all who lay under the stars,
Soldiers and poor, unable to rejoice.

Edward Thomas (1878-1917)

Source : (Daiches, 1950, p.598)

In this poem the owl is used as a symbol of solitude and deprivation, as is made clear in line 15: 'The bird's voice/Speaking for all who lay under the stars'; the cry of the owl is not merely a noise but represents (speaks for) a greater significance: the unhappy life of the poor who have neither shelter, warmth nor food. The owl is often used as a symbol of sadness and solitude because the owl hunts at night, alone, and its cry, composed of long vowel sounds, is sad. The contrast between the loneliness of the night and the warmth and comfort of the inn makes the speaker think of the contrast between his fortunate state and the unfortunate state of the poor.

The Sick Rose

O rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,

In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

William Blake (1757-1827)

Source : (Alexander, 1967 p.3)

The poem, literally, might be interpreted as being only about a rose which has been attacked on a stormy night by a cankerworm. But the connotations of certain words and details are so powerful as to suggest that something more is meant: sick (applied to a flower), invisible, night, howling storm, joy, dark secret love. We may say that the worm symbolizes any corrupting agent which destroys something beautiful by feeding upon it or making love to it.

The central conflict is between the invisible worm that flies in the storm at night and the rose with its traditional associations of beauty. The worm suggests the snake of the Garden of Eden, and since it flies in the night, it seems to have been transmitted like a disease to which all, not just the rose, are vulnerable. The rose as symbol suggests ideal femininity, love and nature in its ideal form. The image of a rose bed with worms invisible, either because they are hidden by the rose or are not to be apprehended visually, is reinforced by the context of sexual assault, secrecy and storm. And the context gives important definition to the symbol. All that is ideal, beautiful, and naturally to be desired and loved is under assault, secretly in the night. The symbol of the rose secretly blighted in a world of darkness

and storm has as many applications in our own world as in Blake's. In both worlds what is open, natural, and beautiful is threatened by motives that are secret and unknown. (Clayes, & Gerietts, 1975, P.43)

Some specific interpretations of the poem are that it refers to the destruction of love by selfishness, possessiveness, or jealousy; of innocence by experience; of humanity by Satan; of imagination by reason.

Allusion

An allusion is a brief mention, a reference in a literary work to something else in the cultural tradition - literary, religious, historical, artistic, mythological, philosophical, that makes us remember an event, a person, or a historical place. It makes us remember a story. That story may be similar to something in the poem. An allusion jogs our memories. It is a shorthand way of bringing into a poem something that we have heard about or read about before. However, only the best known works are therefore alluded to by poets who expect a wide audience. In English, poetry, certain classical myths, the Bible, and Shakespeare's plays contain the most frequent sources of allusion. (Guth, 1981, p.685)

Certain historical events also develop a popular mythology that is evoked when certain names are mentioned - for example, Jove, Diana, Troy, Helene, Plato, Brutus, Cleopatra, Washington, Waterloo, Lincoln, Marx Victoria, Freud, Hitler, Gandhi and Churchill.

Therefore allusions are extremely useful to the poet, they enable the poet to say so much in so little space.

Examples of analyzed poetry:

The World is too Much With Us

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.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

Source : (Miller, & Slote, 1962, p.385)

The main thought of this sonnet is a good example of the Romantic poet's point of view for the beauties of nature. That title itself expresses the chief idea - That the world, in the sense of material things, money, practical affairs, take too much of our time. Therefore, we fail to see and to enjoy the great beauty of nature which should be ours.

There are 2 sections in this poem, an octave - lines 1 to 8 - a lamentation for lost reverence of nature, and a sestet - lines 9 to 14 a statement of preference for a pagan creed that at least allows worship of and communion with nature.

In the octave, the speaker says we are so caught up in 'getting and spending' that 'little we see in nature.' That is, man uses up all his time. Therefore, man has lost contact with nature, lost his love for, and understanding of nature, and all forms of natural beauty. Man is too easily ensnared by the chore of earning a living and providing a home.

In the sestet, under these circumstances, the speaker wishes to get away from this modern materialism. He exclaims that he would rather embrace a 'pagan' creed than lose contact with nature; he should have been born in an earlier period when he felt himself a part of all he saw. Even though the old Greek gods no longer are accepted-their creed or belief is outworn,' the poet would have accepted them happily if he had lived in the old 'classical' days.

To understand a poem, we should imagine the poet standing in a pretty grassy meadow ("this pleasant lea"), on a cliff above the sea. He/she looks out on the beautiful view, and realizes how few men there are who would really enjoy having time just to stand and look at the ocean. Modern man is "out of tune" with nature, just as a badly kept violin might be out of tune with the other instruments in an orchestra. Man has become so practical that only money can "move" him, not quiet natural beauty.

The poem seems to have three parts of ideas. First, the poet declares that all of us "have given our hearts away" or devoted all our time to money affairs, so we cannot enjoy natural beauty anymore. Secondly, he offers examples of beauty in nature which we fail to see. And finally he suggests that he/she would rather have been born back in the old Greek days when people were close to nature. At that time the gods themselves

were gods of nature, the sea and the sky; and the poet might have seen them and believed in them.

The poet's allusions to Proteus (The Odyssey figure who was a man of the sea capable of assuming many shapes) and to Triton (a sea deity who was portrayed as blowing on a conch) are efforts to, "have glimpses that would make me less forlorn". Although he believes that the ancient Greek religion is a "creed outworn," he does find one fact particularly delightful: even though these were pagans, they could sense the beauty and meaning in nature and searched to find the truth of it However, the speaker does sense that a divine spirit, a presence in nature, is all around him. Thus, the allusion makes the meaning of this sonnet precise and vivid.

Metonymy

Metonymy, closely related to synecdoche, is a figure of speech in which a word stands for a closely related idea, instead of naming something, the poet substitutes something associated with it i.e. a substitution of one word for another. In Edward Bulwer Lytton's expression, **"The pen is mightier than the sword,"** the statement was striking, and it has endured largely because of the vivid substitution of "The sword" for the physical force and even more notably of "The pen" for the influence of writing and speech. Pen and sword are metonymies for written ideas and military force respectively. The name of a writer often means "his works, "as in the statement, " I have read all of Shakespeare's" means that we enjoy the writings of Shakespeare's, 'Sweat' in "In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread" represents "hard labor" "The crown" can mean "The monarch."

Metonymy may be synecdoche, using a part for the whole, as when 'horse is used to mean "cavalry." Thus he lived by the sword and died by the sword." substitutes the noun sword for force or violence, the sword being closely associated with force and violence. (Clayes & Gerriets, 1975, p.30)

Examples of analyzed poetry:

The Hand That Signed the Paper

The hand that signed the paper felled a city;
Five sovereign fingers taxed the breath,
Doubled the globe of dead and halved a country;
These five kings did a king to death.

The mighty hand leads to a sloping shoulder,
The finger joints are cramped with chalk;
A goose's quill has put an end to murder
That put an end to talk.

The hand that signed the treaty bred a fever,
And famine grew, and locusts came;
Great is the hand that holds dominion over
Man by a scribbled name.

The five kings count the dead but do not soften
The crusted wound nor stroke the brow;
A hand rules pity as a hand rules heaven;
Hands have no tears to flow.

Dylan Thomas, (1914-1953)

Source : (Knickerbocker, & Reninger, 1974, p.404)

This poem is developed around one major metonymy (the hand representing the ruler) and one major metaphor (the fingers of the hand are

compared to kings). In stanza 2 a minor metonymy is present (the pen representing the treaty signed by the ruler). In line 4 metaphoric and literal language is mixed: the metaphorical 5 kings wrote an order that literally killed a real king.

In lines 11-12 there is an example of verbal irony: the hand does have great political power, but the ruler has no moral greatness (he 'doubled the globe of dead and halved a country); nor does the ruler have any physical strength: he has a sloping shoulder and arthritic fingers. 'Great' is thus ironic. The poet is also drawing a contrast between the consequences of the hand's actions – death, disease, famine, destruction and the triviality of the means by which these consequences are accomplished – the hand merely scribbles its name on a piece of paper. This is the irony of the situation.

Synecdoche

A figure of speech, closely related to metonymy, in which an important part is substituted for the whole or the whole stand for a part. The part selected to stand for the whole must be one directly associated with the subject under discussion. For instance, when talking about "factory hands", the word 'hand' here has come to mean a person who works with his hands in a factory. A report may say that 'five hundred souls were lost in the shipwreck. Here 'souls' means people's lives. We say 'threads' and 'wheels' for 'clothes' and 'car'. 'Roof' is used to mean 'house', 'sail' to mean 'ship', etc. (Murphy, 1980, p.69)

Synecdoche (The use of the part for the whole) and Metonymy (The use of a closely related idea for the idea itself) are so much alike that it is hardly worth while to distinguish between them, and the latter term is increasingly coming to be used for both. In both some significant detail or aspect of an experience is substituted for the experience itself

Many synecdoches and metonymies, like many metaphors, have become so much a part of the language that they no longer strike us as figurative. Such figures are referred to as dead metaphors or dead figures.

Allegory

Allegory is a narrative of description which has second meaning beneath the surface one. Although the surface story or description may have its own interest, the author's major interest is in the ulterior meaning. The meaning may be religious, moral, or political. Allegory is less popular in modern literature than it was in medieval writing, and in these old works is much less often found in short poems than in long works. (Perrine, 1963, pp.76-77)

Examples of analyzed poetry:

The poem by Emily Dickinson given below is an allegorical work in the sense that it used a narrative structure to relate a sequence of symbolic details about the journey from time to eternity:

Because I Could Not Stop For Death

Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me-
The Carriage held but just Ourselves
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility.

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring,
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us,
The Dews drew quivering and chill,
For only Gossamer, my Gown,
My Tippet only Tulle.

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling on the Ground –
The Roof was scarcely visible,
The Cornice – in the Ground.

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity.

Emily Dickinson, 1830-1886

Source : (Perrin, 1963, pp.267-268)

This poem is about the experience of being dead, which can only be expressed in figurative language. Death is compared to a leisurely journey. Because the speaker did not want to stop living ('I could not stop for Death'), Death, personified as a gentleman with a carriage, stops for her

- he calls at her house to take her for a ride. The other passenger is immortality because the destination of the journey is eternity, and the immortal part of us, the soul, accompanies us to eternity.

Death is not the terrible figure which the speaker had expected, but civil and well mannered. In stanza 3, the images of school, fields and the setting sun represent the three stages of life (youth, maturity, old age); the passage of time (beginning, middle, end); and the worldly things one leaves behind one when dead (mankind, nature, universe).

In stanza 4, night arrives. The speaker is dressed in light clothes, which could be the best dress worn for an afternoon ride, or could represent the shroud worn by the dead. In stanza 5 the grave is metaphorically compared to a house.

In stanza 6 the profound and shocking nature of the speaker' realization that death is inevitable is expressed by hyperbole. There is also a paradox here: death must come before its apparent opposite, immortality, can be reached.

The tone is ironic. It is ironic that the speaker was so busy that she didn't think of death until he came to call, and ironic that a supposedly fearful thing like dying is expressed in language suitable to a courtship.

Notice the repetition of words suggesting endless time: 'no haste', 'slowly', 'stop', 'leisure', 'paused', 'centuries'.

Apostrophe

Addressing an absent person, an abstract quality (such as honor or grief), or a non-existent or mythological character (such as a Greek god

or goddess) as though it were human and present or alive; as in the opening line of **John Donne's** poem, "**Death, Be Not Proud,**" in which he is speaking to Death as if it were a person. In this form of address there is the element of personification, which makes us realize that the poet mixes many devices together. (Elder, 2004, p.295) As in John Donne's lines:

'Death, Be Not Proud,"

> **Death,** be not proud, though some have called thee
> Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so.

Another example **William Wordsworth** lamenting over the state of England in his own days, uses apostrophe in his direct address to John Milton, he thinks of John Milton and how boldly in his writings he fought for what he thought was right: (Murphy, 1980, pp.50-51)

> **Milton!** Thou shouldst be living at this hour;
> England hath need of thee…….

In love poems, the poet addresses the woman he loves:

> **O Lady** fair and sweet
> Arise and let us go
> Where comes not rain or snow,
> Excess of cold or heat…..

or sometimes a friend,

> **O Henry** in my hours of ease
> You may say anything you please…….

Tennyson addresses to sea; he talks to the waves rushing towards the shore:

"Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O sea!"

Examples of analyzed poetry:

Let's consider the following poem

Waller begins his "song" by apostrophizing the rose, his rose is an image that happens to be compared in the first stanza to the woman:

Song

Go, lovely rose!
Tell her that wastes her time and me
hat now she knows,
When I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young,
And shuns to have her graces spied,
That hadst thou sprung
In deserts, where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired;
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.

Then die! That she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee;
How small a part of time they share
That are so wondrous sweet and fair!

Edmund Waller (1606-1687)

Source : (Kennedy & Gioia, 1998, p.500)

This is the **carpe diem*** theme. The poet personifies the rose as a messenger who can tell the woman he desires, but who is not responding to his desire, that she will die like the rose, despite her youth and beauty. She should, therefore, return his passion whilst she still can. The use of the rose as a symbol of the mutability of beauty is successful, as the rose has in itself the qualities (sweetness, beauty, shortness of life) of the abstraction (mutability) it stands for.

In stanza 1 the rose tells the woman that the poet thinks she is sweet and fair. In stanzas 2 and 3 the message is that as a rose that flowers out of sight wastes its beauty ('uncommended dies') so she will waste her beauty if she hides away from her admirer. In stanza 4 the poet points his moral: the woman will grow old and die and should accept love and pleasure while she can.

The speaker's attitude differs somewhat from the conventional attitude of the lover who sends roses. This man is rather bitter (line 2 'wastes her time and me') towards the woman. He seems to be older than she ('tell her that's young') and perhaps feels that this is why she will not accept him.

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* Carpe Diem theme or seize the day, a Latin phrase used by Horace in lyric poems which exemplify the spirit of "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." It is a very common theme in 16th and 17th century English love poetry lover – poet continually were exhorting their mistresses to yield to love while they still had their youth and beauty, as in Robert Herrick's famous

> Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
> Old time is still a – flying;
> And this same flower that smiles today,
> Tomorrow will be dying.

Another most famous example is Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress." (Holman, 1986, p.74)

The rhyme and metre make the stanza flow slowly and melodically, as does the use of long vowels. The poem expresses a complex relationship. On the one hand, the speaker is eager to have the woman's love; on the other he is not a despairing young man but a rather irritated older man who is conscious that his time is being wasted. The slow rhythm reflects the slight sense of threat present in this poem: if the woman persists in her refusal, perhaps he will find another woman who is more willing. So the poem contains both compliment (comparing the woman to a rose) and threat.

Conclusion

The language of poetry helps us understand what we have read. It offers more than ordinary language does. It makes us think and feel as if we were there to see, hear, or touch it. It makes something abstract turn out to be more concrete for the readers. We can be pleased, excited, annoyed charmed, or interested by listening to its sounds and rhythms. However, the language of poetry is seldom literally exact. The readers must develop a special alertness to catch what is meant but not stated in poetic language in order to enjoy conception and images in reading poetry.

Poems for Practice

Redemption

Having been tenant long to a rich lord,
    Not thriving, I resolved to be bold,
    And make a suit unto him to afford
A new small-rented lease and cancel the old.
In heaven at his manor I him sought.

They told me there he was lately gone
About some land which he had dearly bought
Long since on earth, to take possession.
I straight returned, and knowing his great birth,
Sought him accordingly in great resorts,
In cities, theaters, gardens, parks, and courts
At length I heard a ragged noise and mirth
Of thieves and murderers; there I him espied,
Who straight, "Your suit is granted," said, and died.

George Herbert (1539-1633)

Song: To Celia

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,
And I'll not look for wine.
The thirst that from the soul doth rise,
Doth ask a drink divine:
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honoring thee,
As giving it a hope, that there
It could not withered be.
But thou thereon did'st only breathe,
And sent'st it back to me;
Since when it grows and smells, I swear,
Not of itself, but thee.

Ben Jonson (1573-1637)

To……………..

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory –
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.
Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heap'd for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,

Love itself shall slumber on.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)