

## **My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun** (Sonnet 130)

by William Shakespeare

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.  
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
As any she belied with false compare.

### **ANALYSIS 1**

#### SONNET 130 PARAPHRASE

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun; My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red; Coral is far more red than her lips;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun; If snow is white, then her breasts are a brownish gray;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head. If hairs are like wires, hers are black and not golden.  
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white, I have seen damask roses, red and white [streaked],  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks; But I do not see such colors in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight And some perfumes give more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks. Than the horrid breath of my mistress.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know I love to hear her speak, but I know

That music hath a far more pleasing sound; That music has a more pleasing sound.

I grant I never saw a goddess go; I've never seen a goddess walk;

My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground: But I know that my mistress walks only on the ground.

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare And yet I think my love as rare

As any she belied with false compare. As any woman who has been misrepresented by ridiculous comparisons.

#### ANALYSIS

dun (3): i.e., a dull brownish gray.

roses damasked, red and white (5): This line is possibly an allusion to the rose known as the York and Lancaster variety, which the House of Tudor adopted as its symbol after the War of the Roses. The York and Lancaster rose is red and white streaked, symbolic of the union of the Red Rose of Lancaster and the White Rose of York. Compare *The Taming of the Shrew*: "Such war of white and red within her cheeks!" (4.5.32). Shakespeare mentions the damask rose often in his plays. Compare also *Twelfth Night*:

She never told her love,

But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,

Feed on her damask cheek. (2.4.118)

than the breath...reeks (8): i.e., than in the breath that comes out of (reeks from) my mistress.

As the whole sonnet is a parody of the conventional love sonnets written by Shakespeare's contemporaries, one should think of the most common meaning of reeks, i.e., stinks. Shakespeare uses reeks often in his serious work, which illustrates the modern meaning of the word was common. Compare *Macbeth*:

Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds

Or memorise another Golgotha,

I cannot tell. (1.2.44)

rare (13): special.

she (14): woman.

belied (14): misrepresented.

with false compare (14): i.e., by unbelievable, ridiculous comparisons.

Sonnet 130 is the poet's pragmatic tribute to his uncomely mistress, commonly referred to as the dark lady because of her dun complexion. The dark lady, who ultimately betrays the poet, appears in sonnets 127 to 154. Sonnet 130 is clearly a parody of the conventional love sonnet, made popular by Petrarch and, in particular, made popular in England by Sidney's use of the Petrarchan form in his epic poem *Astrophel and Stella*.

If you compare the stanzas of *Astrophel and Stella* to Sonnet 130, you will see exactly what elements of the conventional love sonnet Shakespeare is light-heartedly mocking. In Sonnet 130, there is no use of grandiose metaphor or allusion; he does not compare his love to Venus, there is no evocation to Morpheus, etc. The ordinary beauty and humanity of his lover are important to Shakespeare in this sonnet, and he deliberately uses typical love poetry metaphors against themselves.

In Sidney's work, for example, the features of the poet's lover are as beautiful and, at times, more beautiful than the finest pearls, diamonds, rubies, and silk. In Sonnet 130, the references to such objects of perfection are indeed present, but they are there to illustrate that his lover is not as beautiful -- a total rejection of Petrarch form and content. Shakespeare utilizes a new structure, through which the straightforward theme of his lover's simplicity can be developed in the three quatrains and neatly concluded in the final couplet.

Thus, Shakespeare is using all the techniques available, including the sonnet structure itself, to enhance his parody of the traditional Petrarchan sonnet typified by Sidney's work. But Shakespeare ends the sonnet by proclaiming his love for his mistress despite her lack of adornment, so he does finally embrace the fundamental theme in Petrarch's sonnets: total and consuming love.

One final note: To Elizabethan readers, Shakespeare's comparison of hair to 'wires' would refer to the finely-spun gold threads woven into fancy hair nets. Many poets of the time used this term as a benchmark of beauty, including Spenser:

Some angel she had been,  
Her long loose yellow locks like golden wire,  
Sprinkled with pearl, and pearling flowers atween,  
Do like a golden mantle her attire,  
And being crowned with a garland green.

## **ANALYSIS 2**

### Summary

This sonnet compares the speaker's lover to a number of other beauties—and never in the lover's favor. Her eyes are "nothing like the sun," her lips are less red than coral; compared to white snow, her breasts are dun-colored, and her hairs are like black wires on her head. In the second quatrain,

the speaker says he has seen roses separated by color (“damasked”) into red and white, but he sees no such roses in his mistress’s cheeks; and he says the breath that “reeks” from his mistress is less delightful than perfume. In the third quatrain, he admits that, though he loves her voice, music “hath a far more pleasing sound,” and that, though he has never seen a goddess, his mistress—unlike goddesses—walks on the ground. In the couplet, however, the speaker declares that, “by heav’n,” he thinks his love as rare and valuable “As any she belied with false compare”—that is, any love in which false comparisons were invoked to describe the loved one’s beauty.

### Commentary

This sonnet, one of Shakespeare’s most famous, plays an elaborate joke on the conventions of love poetry common to Shakespeare’s day, and it is so well-conceived that the joke remains funny today. Most sonnet sequences in Elizabethan England were modeled after that of Petrarch. Petrarch’s famous sonnet sequence was written as a series of love poems to an idealized and idolized mistress named Laura. In the sonnets, Petrarch praises her beauty, her worth, and her perfection using an extraordinary variety of metaphors based largely on natural beauties. In Shakespeare’s day, these metaphors had already become cliché (as, indeed, they still are today), but they were still the accepted technique for writing love poetry. The result was that poems tended to make highly idealizing comparisons between nature and the poets’ lover that were, if taken literally, completely ridiculous. My mistress’ eyes are like the sun; her lips are red as coral; her cheeks are like roses, her breasts are white as snow, her voice is like music, she is a goddess.

In many ways, Shakespeare’s sonnets subvert and reverse the conventions of the Petrarchan love sequence: the idealizing love poems, for instance, are written not to a perfect woman but to an admittedly imperfect man, and the love poems to the dark lady are anything but idealizing (“My love is as a fever, longing still / For that which longer nurseth the disease” is hardly a Petrarchan conceit.) Sonnet 130 mocks the typical Petrarchan metaphors by presenting a speaker who seems to take them at face value, and somewhat bemusedly, decides to tell the truth. Your mistress’ eyes are like the sun? That’s strange—my mistress’ eyes aren’t at all like the sun. Your mistress’ breath smells like perfume? My mistress’ breath reeks compared to perfume. In the couplet, then, the speaker shows his full intent, which is to insist that love does not need these conceits in order to be real; and women do not need to look like flowers or the sun in order to be beautiful.

The rhetorical structure of Sonnet 130 is important to its effect. In the first quatrain, the speaker spends one line on each comparison between his mistress and something else (the sun, coral, snow, and wires—the one positive thing in the whole poem some part of his mistress is like. In the second and third quatrains, he expands the descriptions to occupy two lines each, so that roses/cheeks, perfume/breath, music/voice, and goddess/mistress each receive a pair of unrhymed lines. This creates the effect of an expanding and developing argument, and neatly prevents the poem—which does, after all, rely on a single kind of joke for its first twelve lines—from becoming stagnant.

## THE NEGRO'S COMPLAINT (1788)

by William Cowper

FORCED from home and all its pleasures

Afric's coast I left forlorn,

To increase a stranger's treasures

O'er the raging billows borne.

Men from England bought and sold me,

Paid my price in paltry gold;

But, though slave they have enrolled me,

Minds are never to be sold.

Still in thought as free as ever,

What are England's rights, I ask,

Me from my delights to sever,

Me to torture, me to task ?

Fleecy locks and black complexion

Cannot forfeit nature's claim;

Skins may differ, but affection

Dwells in white and black the same.

Why did all-creating nature

Make the plant for which we toil?

Sighs must fan it, tears must water,

Sweat of ours must dress the soil.

Think, ye masters iron-hearted,

Lolling at your jovial boards,

Think how many backs have smarted

For the sweets your cane affords.

Is there, as ye sometimes tell us,

Is there One who reigns on high?

Has He bid you buy and sell us,  
    Speaking from his throne, the sky?  
Ask him, if your knotted scourges,  
    Matches, blood-extorting screws,  
Are the means that duty urges  
    Agents of his will to use?

Hark! He answers!--Wild tornadoes  
    Strewing yonder sea with wrecks,  
Wasting towns, plantations, meadows,  
    Are the voice with which he speaks.  
He, foreseeing what vexations  
Afric's sons should undergo,  
Fixed their tyrants' habitations  
    Where his whirlwinds answer--"No."

By our blood in Afric wasted  
    Ere our necks received the chain;  
By the miseries that we tasted,  
    Crossing in your barks the main;  
By our sufferings, since ye brought us  
    To the man-degrading mart,  
All sustained by patience, taught us  
    Only by a broken heart;

Deem our nation brutes no longer,  
    Till some reason ye shall find  
Worthier of regard and stronger  
    Than the colour of our kind.  
Slaves of gold, whose sordid dealings  
    Tarnish all your boasted powers,

Prove that you have human feelings,

Ere you proudly question ours!

### **ANALYSIS 1**

William Cowper was an eighteenth century English poet, who is famous for his descriptions of ordinary people and scenes ("Selected"). He often wrote about people residing in more rural regions and was incredibly sympathetic to the plight of the poor and those considered outsiders (Encyclopedia). Cowper wrote simply and did not attempt to glamorize the lives of his subjects. Much of his work is humorous at face value but reveals dark or serious undertones. Some of this darkness may have been a reflection of the struggles and hardships in Cowper's own life—he struggled with mental illness several times, attempted suicide, and spent time in an asylum (Smith). Cowper also contributed several works to the great religious revival of the eighteenth century. It was the request of a friend, activist and abolitionist William Wilberforce, which inspired Cowper to write "The Negro's Complaint" (Aronowitz). This poem is one of the few he wrote opposing slavery.

In "The Negro's Complaint," Cowper assumes the voice of an enslaved African, taken from his homeland and forced to work on a sugar plantation in the Americas. In the first stanza, he describes the horror of being "forced" from Africa's coast and "all its pleasures," only to be purchased by an English man, so that he might "increase a stranger's treasures" (Cowper). Cowper is clearly against slavery and sympathetic to the stolen lives of so many slaves. His personal antidote serves as a reminder of the injustice of slavery. In the second stanza, the attitude is much more positive, as the speaker recognizes that though his body is enslaved, his mind is free. He begins to question the system that afflicts him and so many others, and ultimately determines "Skins may differ, but affection/Dwells in white and black the same" (Cowper). In the third stanza, Cowper makes reference to sugar cane, wondering why the "all-creating nature" ever devised the product that caused African slaves so much misery. He includes a jab at the slave owners, encouraging them to think of the slaves whose "backs have smarted for the sweets your cane affords" (Cowper). The poem goes on to question why African slaves must suffer for the profit of others (Aronowitz).

Cowper's reference to the sugar plantations serves as a reminder of their significance during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, he draws a clear connection between the increasingly common slave trade and the labor-intensive sugar plantations. He almost mocks the absurdity of human suffering in exchange the satisfaction of Europe's sweet tooth. Cowper's poem, with its anti-slavery views, represents the increasing voices that were questioning the morality of slavery in eighteenth century Europe—as it touches on the themes of slavery, resistance, human rights, sugar, and trade. Furthermore, Cowper's poem argues colonial power is tied to colonial production and the exportation of goods, which are dependent on the system of slavery. By assuming the identity of an African, Cowper is able to provide greater insight about the experience and identity of slaves. By today's standards, "The Negro's Complaint" is not all that revolutionary. Many historians agree with the themes and attitudes that Cowper conveyed in his poem. However, the poetic format of Cowper's views provides a creative twist and new perspective.

### **ANALYSIS 2**

Professor Foss started class by collecting our Summary Analysis papers. Today we examined abolitionist poetry and other poems pertaining to slavery. The first writer that we discussed was

Cowper. Cowper was an easily recognizable poet at his time, his popularity just fringing outside of the "Big Six." As an evangelical Christian writer, Cowper teamed with John Newton to write poetry for the Abolitionist movement. We read two of Cowper's poems entitled, "The Negro's Complaint" (62) and "Pity for Poor Africans" (63). "The Negro's Complaint" is written from a slave's perspective. The speaker addresses the British public in an aggravated tone. The speaker poses the question, "Which nation is the nation of brutes?" The poem ends rhetorically when the narrator reverses the roles of the slaves and the British by stating that the British are the true slaves to wealth. The speaker also takes a different approach to the pro-slavery argument that keeping slaves is a way of spreading Christianity. In the second stanza on the second column of the first page the speaker asks the British if their God has commanded them to collect slaves. God's answer, a resounding no, comes later in the form of natural disasters.

Next we read Amelia Alderson Opie's poem, "The Black Man's Lament" (82). Similar to Cowper's "The Negro's Complaint," Opie's poem is narrated by an African. In "The Black Man's Lament" the first four stanzas as well as the last stanza are written in another man's voice. The slave in this poem discusses the toil and work needed to sow sugar cane and the contrast between slaves and the English peasant. The speaker explains that because of their immense pain, slaves find it hard to believe in the God of their slaveholders. The slave states that because of the injustice his people have gone through, they cannot practice Christian forgiveness.

Both of these poems are written in the voice of an African speaker. We discussed the difference between the actual African voices from the works that we read on Tuesday and the characterized African voices from the English perspective. We noted that the poems were accusatory and romanticized as opposed to the prose that was more detailed. The poems have no first hand experiences to draw on, unlike the works of prose that we studied earlier in the week. We noted in class discussion that the English writers wrote with a more accusing voice. This was mostly due to the fact that English writers indulged in their freedom of speech. The black writers had to prove that they deserved to be heard and given more weight in society because most English believed in racial superiority. Rhetorical strategies are present in both of the types of work that we have studied for this unit.

The next poem that we discussed was "Pity for Poor Africans" (63) by Cowper. This is written from an Englishman's perspective. The speaker is pained by slavery but not enough to do anything to change it. This was a predominant opinion in England; most Englishmen objected to slavery and the slave trade but did not commit themselves to actively changing the issue. Cowper mocks those who act in this superficial manner. One line that we paid particular attention to was the last line of the first stanza "Is almost enough to draw pity from stones." In this line Cowper states that a majority of the British who feel this way have uncaring hearts. This poem deliberately makes the viewpoint of the British look completely absurd.

The last poem that we were able to read and discuss in class was Robert Southey's "The Sailor, Who Had Served in the Slave Trade." (68) This poem seemed the most effective to the class because it showed the most emotion. Greater impact was given to parties involved, the slave and the sailor, when compared with the remembrances of Mary Prince in regards to the story of Hetty. Both stories were absolutely heartbreaking but Southey seemed to deliver his story more effectively. The reader finds himself invested in the sufferings of the sailor knowing that he feels such terrible remorse. For the remaining time of class, we discussed the power of the poem and argued its effectiveness. We were not able to cover the poems of Barbauld, Wordsworth, or Bellamy.



### **ANALYSIS 3**

The "The Negro's Complaint" was written in 1778, when slavery was still legal. People view on this poem is very controversial. The poem main focus is on slaves and how they where treated. In the first stanza the narrator talks

about how they where force from they home in Africa and had to leave all their belongs behind. They felt like all their belongs where taken from them, to only be given to a complete stranger. The narrator said, "but though they have enroll'd me Minds are never to be sold." He is saying they can physically take me from my homeland but they can not keep my mind from going back to that place.

From the Marxist point of view it was about slavery. Abolition of the trade of slaves.

## **The bustle in a house**

By Emily Dickinson

The bustle in a house

The morning after death

Is solemnest of industries

Enacted upon earth,--

The sweeping up the heart,

And putting love away

We shall not want to use again

Until eternity.

### **ANALYSIS 1**

This is yet another poem by Dickinson about death. Her focus is not on ones personal death, but the death of a loved one. Again in this poem, she capitalizes certain words to give them emphasis on the overall meaning. In the first line, the word Bustle is capitalized to really show the high energy in people after the death of a close loved one. She also capitalizes House to represent the connection of the people involved. In the second line, she capitalizes two words; Morning and Death. Morning can have a double meaning in this particular poem. One is the actual words meaning, the beginning of the day, and the other is the word Mourning, which is lamenting over the loss of someone. Dickinson's recognizable diction in the third line sets the mood of the poem by detailing to the reader the solemnness of the death and even compares it to an industry, which gives the situation a distinct ritual that needs to be followed. In the second stanza of the poem Dickinson begins with saying, "The Sweeping up the Heart." This is a powerful line by the poet, because it forms a

connection between anyone who has felt a pain like this and the poet. Dickinson realizes how important love is and doesn't neglect it in this second stanza. In the second through fourth line, she continues on with the sweeping of the heart to putting the love away, and having no need with it again until eternity. Dickinson is relaying that even though death may come with a very deep impact, we shouldn't mourn over a death for a long time, and just sweep up the broken pieces and save our love and emotions for that person until our eternity, death. Dickinson uses the pause between the first and second stanza as a shift, turning from the shock of death, to the emotion of lost love.

## **ANALYSIS 2**

Emily Dickinson wrote "The Bustle in a House" in 1866. It is a ballad with two stanzas of four lines each, or two quatrains. There is no set rhyme scheme, because each of the lines is enjambed. The meter of the poem is trimeter, with every third line of each stanza being tetrameter.

The theme of The Bustle In the House is about how losing a loved one, while it is depressing in many ways, must not affect how we live our lives. Having to deal with many deaths herself, Emily Dickinson wrote this poem depicting the grievances she went through after losing her family members. The poem is written in a serious, yet calm tone, not despairing over the losses; the death was merely a "Bustle in a House". People would generally consider death to be the worst disaster that a loved one can endure, but Dickinson downplays death and reduces it to a "bustle", a mere stir in a household.

Dickinson's word usage and capitalization are also subjects of criticism in this work. The capitalization of the word "Morning" shows that the word denotes something else. As previously stated, she physically demonstrates that man should not mourn over the loss with an absence of the word "mourning" and instead is replaced by "Morning". "House" represents a place where life starts and where life ends. However, it is also a place that is unchanging and remains the same for eternity. Dickinson shows the importance of man moving on and how man should be like the house, where it continues to function in society. Society does not wait until man recovers from his loss, but rather carries on its tasks.

Dickinson also has heavy use of symbolism to show that man must accept deaths as they come and not mourn...

## **ANALYSIS 3**

"The Bustle in a House", is focusing on the death leading to insight found in Emily Dickinson's poem. In another word the poem is about death of someone close and dear. The references to grief after the death of a loved one show that death is obviously a central theme. Also, it's about house cleaning which is being compared to coming terms with reality of death, by sweeping up the broken heart, and keeping the love of that person in memory, "And putting Love away".

It is very obvious that the poem is about death from the first stanza indicates that the people move about the house to get their minds off the grief of the loss of a loved one. However, in line 6 the difference between cleaning and bringing oneself back together is that the person does not discard anything; they keep the memory with them. This is a brilliant way of Dickinson to use those to themes in a metaphor because of the fact that over coming grief of a deceased love one is somewhat similar to cleaning: people pick themselves up after being down. When closely, last two

lines of the poem suggest how Dickinson feels about immortality. It seems that she believes that once we die that it will not end. Also, she feels that people should keep memories with them because once they go to heaven, or eternity, they will use them.

In conclusion the theme in this poem is concerned with death. In My opinion that all the commotion that goes in a house when someone dies makes you forget about everything...

### a young man's thoughts before june the 16th

tomorrow i travel on a road  
that winds to the top of the hill  
i take with me only the sweet  
memories of my youth  
my heart aches for my mother                      5  
forfriday nights with friends  
around a table with the broad belch of beer  
i ask only for a sad song  
sung by a woman with downturned eyes  
and strummed by an old man with                      10  
a broken brow  
o sing my sad song sing for me  
for my sunset is drenched with red

1. Why do you think the poem has been written in lower case lettering?
2. What poetic device has the poet used to allow one line to flow into another?
3. Why does the speaker's heart ache for his mother?
4. What does the speaker anticipate will happen the following day?
5. Which three things does the speaker feel he will miss the most?
6. What sound device does the poet use in line 7?
7. Why do you think he has used this device
8. Why does the speaker ask for a sad song to be sung?
9. Why might the woman who is singing have 'downturned eyes'?
10. What does the poet mean by an 'an old man with a broken brow'?

11. Why has the poet used an 'o' in the beginning of line 12?
12. What sound device does the poet use in line 12?
13. Why is the speaker's sunset drenched in red?
14. What is the tone of this poem?
15. If the speaker could anticipate what would happen the next day, why do you think he went anyway?

## **ANALYSIS 1**

### **Background**

In 1976, the students of Soweto lead the protest against the government's plans to implement Bantu education. This marked the beginning of the Soweto uprising, many were shot or killed by the police during this demonstration against education in Afrikaans.

This pathos poem communicates the thoughts and feelings of one of the students in 1976, who would lose his life in the protest. This poem concentrates on the human aspects rather than political convictions.

### **Title**

A young man's thoughts before June 16<sup>th</sup>

"A young man" is a general reference to the protesters of June 16<sup>th</sup>, by being unspecific, this suggests that the casualties of the protests are of a high number and also the large group that participated in the protest on the 16<sup>th</sup>,.

"thoughts" suggests that the poem is reflective.

### **Body**

tomorrow i travel on a road

that winds to the top of the hill

In lines 1 and 2 the speaker expects to encounter a difficult and unpredictable path ahead of him, it is a metaphor for life.

"i" suggests that the speaker feels that he is insignificant when compared with his comrades in the protest.

“winds” suggests the unforeseeable future. The path ahead of the young man is not straightforward but rather twisted and difficult. It requires strength, effort, discipline and courage to reach “the top of the hill.”

i take with me only the sweet

memories of my youth

Lines 2 and 4 conveys the bitterness of the young man, it suggests that the young man is required to sacrifice things that mean a lot to him.

The enjambment and isolation of “memories of my youth” further emphasizes the sacrifices of the young man, which is meaningful to him and lacks material items.

my heart aches for my mother

In line 5, the speaker conveys his distress, which suggests that danger awaits him.

“aches” suggests suffering and a continuing pain. It also suggests that the speaker’s mother would grief for his death.

“for” suggests the speakers longing for a sense of security and protection provided by his mother. This longing implies the strong bond between the speaker and his mother.

forfriday nights with friends

around a table with the broad belch of beer

These 2 lines, 6 and 7, suggests that the speaker is an ordinary young man. Here he collects his thoughts and memories before joining the protest.

The alliteration of the f-sound suggests harmony and good friendship.

The speaker’s relationship with his friends is suggested to be unconditional, they accept each other’s “broad belch” unconditionally.

i ask only for a sad song

sung by a woman with downturned eyes

Lines 8 and 9 suggests the speaker’s absence.

The alliteration of the s-sound suggests a hushed, sorrow song.

“downturned eyes” is a submissive action which may either suggest sincerity or that the woman is hiding her sorrows by avoiding eye contact.

a broken brow

This line conveys an image of the old man's brows, which may either be 'broken' by a scar, which then suggest violence, or it may be 'broken' by wrinkles of grief.

The forceful sound of 'b' suggests suppression and oppression.

o sing my sad song sing for me

"o" this is an interjection which emphasizes the speaker's grief.

"sing for me" suggests that the speaker is no longer present, therefore he cannot sing for himself.

for my sunset is drenched with red

"drenched" conveys an image of abundance and saturation. This suggests that on June 16th, a large number of youths would fall victim to the violence.

"red" is a metaphor for death, bloodshed and violence. This word also suggests the passion, love and anger of the young man and the protesters.

## **Structure**

Free verse without punctuation: Suggests that the speaker lacks education due to apartheid, it also suggests the simpleness of the speaker's idea and dream, to receive a better education.

The lack of punctuation suggests the lack of conformity to language conventions. This suggests that the order set by punctuations are broken. Without order, the speaker is conveyed to be vulnerable and not in control.

The run-on-line and enjambment reflects natural speech and a conversational tone, which is linked with resignation, acceptance and a longing tone.

## **ANALYSIS 2**

Analysis of 'A Young Man's Thoughts before June the 16th' – FazelJohennesse

The historical background to the poem is June 16th 1976. This date marks the Soweto Uprising which was initiated in Soweto by black high school students. The students were protesting against being taught in Afrikaans in their local schools. The demonstration was meant to be peaceful and was secretly planned to avoid discovery by the police. On the morning of June the 16th, thousands of youths gathered with the plan to march to Orlando Stadium to hold a rally to air their grievances. However, their intended route was blocked by riot police, and what had started as a peaceful march turned bloody as police used live ammunition on the protesters. Evidence shows that many protesters were shot in the back as they were running away. [Readers Digest Illustrated History of South Africa, (1988: 440) and Wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soweto\\_uprising](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soweto_uprising))]

The journey that the speaker is going to go on in lines 1 – 2 suggests a struggle and an ultimate goal to be reached. The journey has been planned as the speaker refers to 'tomorrow' in line 1. He then talks about the road 'that winds'. This suggests many twists and turns in the journey, which in turn

suggests that the journey will not be an easy or straight-forward one. The words 'top of the hill' suggest the end of the journey or the ultimate goal. The final goal or destination will only be reached by means of an uphill struggle.

The word 'only' is used in line 3 – 'I take with me only the sweet memories of my youth'. The speaker is ready for his journey and takes with him just what is important – his memories. His memories are his only link to the innocence of his youth, and he knows that the following day, his life is going to change forever – he will lose his childlike innocence and have to face an altered world

## **ANALYSIS 2**

Glossary:

Strummed – played noisily or badly upon a stringed instrument.

Enjambment – the unbroken continuation of a sentence from the end of one line to the beginning of another.

Alliteration – the use of words in sequence that all begin with the same letter.

Melancholy – to be gloomy or depressed.

Nostalgia – yearning for what is past or inaccessible; sentimental feelings for past happiness.

Summary:

The poem communicates the thoughts and feelings of one of the students in 1976 who would lose his life during the protests of June 16  
th

. This was the protest of bantu education  
by thousands of black schoolchildren, many of whom were shot and killed by the police. The poem concentrates on the human aspects rather than political convictions. The student has no feelings of bitterness toward anyone and expresses an acceptance of his impending fate.

Tone:

- . nostalgia
- . melancholy
- . longing
- . acceptance

Enjambment:

Reflects natural speech patterns and adds to the conversational mood of the poem.

Structure:

Lack of punctuation and free verse:

- . Reflects flow of thoughts.
- . Breaks from normal format – protest for change (see synopsis).
- . Suggests inferior education.
- . A lack of control over the situation.

Interpretation:

Key:

Green – important connotation

Yellow – alliteration

Line:

1. The student looks to tomorrow; the day of the protest. 'i' suggests the student's insignificance in the perspective of improving education for all non-white school goers and his acceptance of the sacrifice he will make to achieve this. That the student will 'travel on a road' suggests the well known metaphor of life being a journey.

2. The student's journey in life is full of difficulty, as suggested by 'winds' and 'hill'. It also suggests the student's determination as persistence is needed to navigate a winding, uphill road. The student's life is aimed at achieving a specific goal or summative achievement, in this case the improvement of non-white education.

3,4. The student takes only his memories on the winding road for comfort. The memories are clearly important to the speaker which emphasises the importance of the human aspects of the protest rather than the political (see synopsis).

5. The student realises the heartache and grief his death will bring to his mother.

6. The student longs for a time when his life was simpler, and for the social presence of his friends. This shows the student to possess strong interpersonal bonds.



7. The student recollects a simple instance with friends. This further emphasises that the student is merely a normal young man.

8. In remembrance the student asks only that he be mourned with a song. This may suggest that he wishes his friends and family not to grieve for long over his passing.

9. The woman who is to sing for him (assumedly his mother) has downturned eyes. This could either be seen as a way to hide her grief or as a sign of submission to the oppressor (the apartheid government).

10. The student would also have an old man (assumedly his father) to grieve by means of the song.

11. The man has a 'broken brow'. This may suggest physical scarring but may also suggest that it is furrowed from emotion. This may be from the grief of the student's death or from the years of oppression suffered under apartheid.

12. The student asks others to sing for him which may suggest that he is already dead, as he cannot sing for himself.

13. The student describes the end of his life ('sunset') as red. Red has connotations of anger, passion, blood and violence, all of which detail the occurrences during the protest. 'Drenched' suggests his complete hopelessness of escape from the violence and bloodshed. It also adds to the image of blood and suggests a large number of death.

Alliteration:

'B' (line 7)- Links with belching onomatopoeia.

'S' (line 8-9, 12)- Creates mood- hushed, mellow, sorrowful.

My Grandmother's Love Letters

By Hart Crane 1899–1932

There are no stars tonight

But those of memory.

Yet how much room for memory there is

In the loose girdle of soft rain.

There is even room enough

For the letters of my mother's mother,

Elizabeth,

That have been pressed so long

Into a corner of the roof

That they are brown and soft,

And liable to melt as snow.

Over the greatness of such space

Steps must be gentle.

It is all hung by an invisible white hair.

It trembles as birch limbs webbing the air.

And I ask myself:

“Are your fingers long enough to play

Old keys that are but echoes:  
Is the silence strong enough  
To carry back the music to its source  
And back to you again  
As though to her?"

Yet I would lead my grandmother by the hand  
Through much of what she would not understand;  
And so I stumble. And the rain continues on the roof  
With such a sound of gently pitying laughter.

#### ANALYSIS 1

Hart Crane My Grandmother's Love Letter Pg 130

Form

6 stanzas with varied length, 3×3 line stanzas

Rhyme scheme:

Some rhyming couplets: "hair" "air"

"hand" "understand"

Rhetorical question format of stanza 4-5

Imagery

Metaphor/personification: "Loose girdle of soft rain" Rain is compared to a loose belt: how much space will there be for memories?

Simile: letters are liable to melt as snow. Emphasizes their fragility.

Line 14-15 the memories are hung by old grey hairs, thin, easily broken

Shake like birch limbs: lack of security

Metaphor of playing the piano, suggests that the person remembering may not have long enough fingers or a good enough sound(silence) to carry the music back to its source. Retrieving memories requires concentration, skill.

Is it possible to communicate/ understand the lives of those two generations back?

Metaphor of leading grandmother through a path of understanding, but stumbling along the way himself.

Cynical nature of the unseen watcher: “gently pitying laughter” The attempt is unlikely to be successful.

Harold Hart Crane (July 21, 1899 – April 27, 1932) was an American poet. Finding both inspiration and provocation in the poetry of T. S. Eliot, Crane wrote poetry that was traditional in form, difficult and often archaic in language, and which sought to express something more than the ironic despair that Crane found in Eliot’s poetry. Though frequently condemned as being difficult beyond comprehension[citation needed], Crane has proved in the long run to be one of the most influential poets in English language of his generation.

•

Hart Crane was born in Garrettsville, Ohio. His father, Clarence, was a successful Ohio businessman who had made his fortune in the candy business with chocolate bars. He originally held the patent for the Life Saver, but sold his interest to another businessman just before the candy became popular. Crane’s mother and father were constantly fighting, and early in April, 1917, they divorced[1]. It was shortly thereafter that Hart dropped out of high school and headed to New York City. Between 1917 and 1924 he moved back and forth between New York and Cleveland, working as an advertising copywriter and a worker in his father’s factory. From Crane’s letters, it appears that New York was where he felt most at home, and much of his poetry is set there.

Crane was gay and associated his sexuality with his vocation as a poet. Raised in the Christian Science tradition of his mother, he never ceased to view himself as a pariah in relation to society. However, as poems such as “Repose of Rivers” make clear, he felt that this sense of alienation was necessary in order for him to attain the visionary insight that formed the basis for his poetic work.

Throughout the early 1920s, small but well-respected literary magazines published some of Crane’s lyrics, gaining him, among the avant-garde, a respect that *White Buildings* (1926), his first volume, ratified and strengthened. *White Buildings* contains many of Crane’s best lyrics, including “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen,” and a powerful sequence of erotic poems called “Voyages,” written while he was falling in love with Emil Opffer, a Danish merchant mariner.

“Faustus and Helen” was part of a larger artistic struggle to meet modernity with something more than despair. Crane identified T. S. Eliot with that kind of despair, and while he acknowledged the greatness of *The Waste Land*, he also said it was “so damned dead,” an impasse, and a refusal to see “certain spiritual events and possibilities.” Crane’s self-appointed work would be to bring those spiritual events and possibilities to poetic life, and so create “a mystical synthesis of America.” This ambition would finally issue in *The Bridge* (1930), where the Brooklyn Bridge is both the poem’s central symbol and its poetic starting point.

The Bridge received poor reviews for the most part, but much worse than that was Crane's sense of failure. It was during the late '20s, while he was finishing The Bridge, that his drinking, always a problem, got notably worse.

While on a Guggenheim Fellowship in Mexico in 1931-32, his drinking continued while he suffered from bouts of alternating depression and elation. His only heterosexual relationship – with Peggy Cowley, the soon to be ex-wife of his friend Malcolm Cowley, who joined Crane in the south when the Cowleys agreed to divorce – occurred here, and “The Broken Tower,” one of his last published poems, emerges from that affair. Crane still felt himself a failure, though, in part because he recommenced homosexual activity despite his relationship with Cowley. Just before noon on 27 April 1932, while onboard the steamship SS Orizaba[2] heading back to New York from Mexico – right after he was beaten up for making sexual advances to a male crew member, which may have appeared to confirm his idea that one could not be happy as a homosexual – he committed suicide by jumping into the Gulf of Mexico. Although he had been drinking heavily and left no suicide note, witnesses believed Crane's intentions to be suicidal, as several reported that he exclaimed “Goodbye, everybody!” before throwing himself overboard.

His body was never recovered. A marker on his father's tombstone in Garrettsville includes the inscription, “Harold Hart Crane 1899-1932 LOST AT SEA”.

Crane's critical effort – like Keats and Rilke – is most pronounced in his letters: he corresponded regularly with Allen Tate, Yvor Winters, and Gorham Munson, and shared critical dialogues with Eugene O'Neill, William Carlos Williams, E. E. Cummings, Sherwood Anderson, Kenneth Burke, Waldo Frank, Harriet Monroe, Marianne Moore, and Gertrude Stein.

Most serious work on Crane begins with his letters, selections of which are available in many editions of his poetry; his letters to Munson, Tate, Winters, and his patron, Otto Hermann Kahn, have been particularly valuable. Even his two most famous stylistic defenses emerged from correspondences: his Emersonian “General Aims and Theories” (1925) was written to urge Eugene O'Neill's critical foreword to *White Buildings*, then passed around among friends, yet unpublished during Crane's life; and the famous “Letter to Harriet Monroe” (1926) was part of an exchange for the publication of “At Melville's Tomb” in *Poetry*.

### The ‘Logic of Metaphor’

As with Eliot's “objective correlative,” a certain vocabulary haunts Crane criticism, his “logic of metaphor” being perhaps the most vexed. His most quoted formulation is in the circulated, if long unpublished, “General Aims and Theories”:

As to technical considerations: the motivation of the poem must be derived from the implicit emotional dynamics of the materials used, and the terms of expression employed are often selected less for their logical (literal) significance than for their associational meanings. Via this and their metaphorical inter-relationships, the entire construction of the poem is raised on the organic principle of a ‘logic of metaphor,’ which antedates our so-called pure logic, and which is the genetic basis of all speech, hence consciousness and thought-extension.[4]

There is also some mention of it, though it is not so much presented as a critical neologism, in his letter to Harriet Monroe: “...The logic of metaphor is so organically

entrenched in pure sensibility that it can't be thoroughly traced or explain outside of historical sciences, like philology and anthropology...."[5]

L. S. Dembo's influential study of *The Bridge*, Hart Crane's *Sanskrit Charge* (1960), reads this 'logic' well within the familiar rhetoric of the Romantics:

The 'logic of metaphor' was simply the written form of the 'bright logic' of the imagination, the crucial sign stated, the Word made words.... As practiced, the logic of metaphor theory is reducible to a fairly simple linguistic principle: the symbolized meaning of an image takes precedence over its literal meaning; whether or not the vehicle of an image makes sense, the reader is expected to grasp its tenor.[6]

## ANALYSIS 2

### About My Grandmother's Love Letters

Introduced by a variety of writers, artists and other guests, the Scottish Poetry Library's classic poem selections are a reminder of wonderful poems to rediscover.

Ryan Van Winkle on 'My Grandmother's Love Letters':

For the narrator Grandmother was always Grandmother. But after she's dead, the narrator finds her letters in the attic and she becomes 'Elizabeth'. Human. Flesh. A woman with a past, a present, and a predictable future. That Grandmother existed passionately in a past no less dramatic than the narrator's own present comes as a shock.

In families, where we feel we ought to know each other so well, we can always be surprised to find that our fathers can cry or that our mothers have scratched love before. All it takes is a something found: a love letter or a photo of an unknown gentleman with Grandma at the fair and suddenly we see that Grandmother wasn't always Grandmother. Grandmother was Elizabeth.

"There are no stars tonight," Crane begins, "But those of memory." Memory, to me, is the foundation of great poetry. The thing about the past is that once you start thinking about it, you have to come face to face with the distance you've put behind you and the distance (ever shorter) left ahead. You could read this poem as Crane striving to find a connection between him and his grandmother – a connection perhaps as thin as an "invisible white hair." Crane was a not-quite-closeted

homosexual and the lines near the end could be the narrator saying how difficult it would be to explain his interpretation of love to a Grandmother for whom he will always be Grandson. This reading, however popular in queer criticism, misses the deeper, more universal, point. The poet is not merely describing a lack of connection but is realizing that you can never fully understand the weight of another person's interior life. This inability works both ways – for Grandmother and Grandson.

For instance, we see the difficulty in going back to the nostalgia of your memory in the penultimate stanza. There the narrator asks himself: 'Are your fingers long enough to play / Old keys that are but echoes / Is the silence strong enough / To carry back the music to its source'? The answer, to me at least, seems to be "no." The letters themselves are 'liable to melt as snow' and, like memory, are incredibly fragile.

### **I, Being Born a Woman and Distressed**

By Edna St. Vincent Millay

I, being born a woman and distressed  
By all the needs and notions of my kind,  
Am urged by your propinquity to find  
Your person fair, and feel a certain zest  
To bear your body's weight upon my breast:  
So subtly is the fume of life designed,  
To clarify the pulse and cloud the mind,  
And leave me once again undone, possessed.  
Think not for this, however, the poor treason  
Of my stout blood against my staggering brain,  
I shall remember you with love, or season  
My scorn with pity, -- let me make it plain:  
I find this frenzy insufficient reason  
For conversation when we meet again.

## ANALYSIS 1

The speakers of Millay's sonnets, many of whom draw upon the *carpe diem* motif, could never be accused of... sexual coyness: they are outspoken in their defiance of both Death and lovers whose possessiveness resembles Death's embrace. Itemizing the woman's bodily charms as perishable commodities, the blazon identifies the poet-lover both with the potential buyer and with the merchant who displays the woman's wares. Millay's women, on the other hand, aim to do their own spending. They refuse the association of sexual power with youth and beauty, portraying the body's ruin as its badge of sexual authority and the sign that it has been well-used: Millay's speaker is the prize that robs itself, proclaiming to Death and its agents that with the "force I spend / ... [I'll] leave the hungry even in the end" ("Thou famished grave, I will not fill thee yet"). It is she who would spend her "force," burning her candle at both ends, eating up life and love before they manage to eat her...

Millay's love-weary women exist beyond the wholeness that virginity bodies forth and that a poem such as "To His Coy Mistress" [by Andrew Marvell] threatens to undo. Although the traditional *carpe diem* urges upon the virgin a change of state, it is nonetheless the virginal body that it catalogues, precisely because it is the prolongation of the virgin's state that provides the poem's own principle of generation. Where the virginal addressee is a woman with a future bearing down upon her in the form of a lover with Time at his back, Millay's speaker is a woman with a past that has already taught her the ephemerality of all things...

It is true, as some feminist readers complain, that the language of sexual conquest and possession remains central to these poems, but with the difference that the woman speaker often claims for herself the roles of both winner and loser, as in "I Being Born a Woman and Distressed," where she plays all the available roles in the sexual contest simultaneously: she is at once "zestful" and "frenzied" seductress and "staggering" victim, silent beloved and scornful mistress, "distressed," "urged," "undone," and "possessed," yet fully capable of a stylish exit. Since she submits to no one but herself ("the poor treason / Of my stout blood against my staggering brain"), she wins either way, making a game of such "undoing" by emphasizing its reversability and repetition – "once again undone, possessed" (emphasis added). The poem's concluding refusal of conversation ("I find this frenzy insufficient reason / For conversation when we meet again") confirms what the internalization of the sonnet's erotic drama already suggests, that this is not an I / thou encounter, but the woman's way of talking to herself. In its translation of the amorous tussle between man and woman into a battle of blood against brain, the poem illustrates Millay's strategy of displacing male / female poetic relations to the interiority of the woman speaker. Her response to the difficulties of the woman's self-positioning in the sonnet is to take up neither the male nor the female role, but to internalize the sexual drama, all but erasing the role of the eroticized and addressed Other... The internalized erotic contest figures the woman poet's internalization of the poetic tradition, her struggle with the love sonnet's seductive yet (for women poets) impossible plot: she both yields to poetic convention and walks away from it.



## ANALYSIS 2

### I Being Born a Woman and Distressed

“I, being born a woman and distressed’ by poet Edna St. Vincent Millay, is an impacting sonnet that tries to get a political point across alongside a personal one. It talks about what it is to be a woman of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (the poem was written in 1923) and how a Patriarchal Society just isn’t to her preference. Also, this sonnet is written in first person narration, though, it is still not clear whether the narrator is the author or not. Nevertheless this doesn’t stop the narrator, whoever she may be, from expressing a variety of different emotions, thoughts and feelings. They range from lust, confusion and desire to stress, a condescending attitude and the idea of *carpe diem*. It is altogether possible that she wrote this poem out of a whim to do so or she’s using it in an ironic way to get a political point across. The political point being about feminism and the Patriarchal society in which she lived.

In the poem, Millay uses the old style of an Italian sonnet. These were traditionally used by male poets during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century to describe human nature and the emotions of love and lust. The lust was also explored through the idea of *carpe diem* (seize the day) in which to make the most of your days you have to use your body to its highest use. This usually was shown through virginal young women becoming experienced i.e. the ultimate expression of *carpe diem*. Male poets who used the sonnet form usually dealt with this theme. In her poem, Millay rebels and argues against the patriarchal, typical-male, view by using it in an ironic way.

Also, the sonnet is ‘split’. There are fourteen lines in a sonnet and Millay has cut hers into eight- (the octave) and six- (the sestet) lines. The point between these two is the turn or the change that the narrator goes through and in the final six lines it shows her being stronger than what she was in the first eight. Iambic pentameter and couplets also make appearances in her poem.

The narrator of the poem is obviously a woman and is more than likely to be a character of Millay’s who is talking rather than Millay herself. However it is altogether possible that the character is based on Millay herself. Both women seem to have a passion about feminism and want to make that quite clear. Both don’t want to submit to a man permanently and neither does so.

Throughout the poem, the woman goes through a series of different emotions from lust and love to confusion and strife. The lust being described by her as such “Am urged by your propinquity...”

So what she is saying is “I am feeling lust for you when you are near” but in not so many words. However, this is exactly what she’s against basically. She knows

that falling in love with this man may result in her succumbing to him, therefore being under his control which is a slight form of Patriarchal society. Thus, because she is a feminist it's what she's against. So she is in dilemma or strife with herself between this and her beliefs. This confusion is portrayed through the line "cloud the mind" as if to say she can no longer think straight.

When it comes to word choice, however, Millay uses rather interesting words not normally come across in every day language. I say this, but that's because it was eighty odd years ago that this poem was written, so due to the formality in the English language declining, it's only natural to find some of these words 'odd'. Though, back then, they might have been everyday words such as 'propinquity' or 'frenzy'. Also, some of the phrases and words she uses conjures up pictures and metaphors you wouldn't really associate with some ideas such as 'fume of life' which to me is a green gaseous form rising out of some open stalagmite in a dark cave yet is a metaphorical image for a relationship. This is because the fume is volatile, uncontrollable and can evaporate at any moment-like the relationship of theirs.

Due to the use of sonnet form, there are 'rules' or a custom (or customs) that should be followed such as the "14-line" rule and the-common-usage-of-sonnets-to-portray-ideas-of-nature-and-love custom. Well, I say rules and customs, but they're more like guidelines if anything. Another is a hard one to follow; the ten-syllables-to-a-line rule. This makes word choice difficult and I admire those who can do it with ease (or not) because it never fails to amaze me. An example of the word-choice-challenge is: "Am ur-ged by your pro-pin-qui-ty to find". The word of that sentence being "propinquity" which means "nearness". This works, and not just because it fits the rhythm set to the poem due to the syllable limit. Had she said "Am urged by your nearness to find" not only would it be one syllable short, but it just wouldn't have the same effect. 'Propinquity' makes it sound that she is deadly serious about this, she's genuinely enticed by this man. Nearness just doesn't sound right for that kind of strong emotion that she's trying to put across. It wouldn't have done her feelings that she's trying to express justice.

"I being born a woman and distressed"- this being the title and the first line already gives us a big insight into her thoughts and feelings. The first word is (or could be) a direct address to us, meaning she is being completely open and honest with us (/them). She then stresses that she was born female therefore couldn't change her sex and because of her gender she is faced with problems and discrimination. Also she makes it clear that this poem is from a female point of view. The by saying that she's distressed, she attracts sympathy from her audience and makes it seem as though she is a victim of her sex then this ideals continued on in the next line "by all the needs and notions of my kind". Obviously in this line, "my kind" is a direct reference to all the females in the world, also exaggerating the fact that she is quite different to men by using the word 'kind' instead of sex or gender. The needs and notions are the contradictory ideas in this line for the woman. With

the needs, she is expected to do (and not to do) certain things expected of her, as a woman, whereas the notions are her desires, her wants, and her urges. Also her unspoken desires for equality and freedom, but the needs get in the way of all of that causing her to be at strife with herself. The next line (Am urged by your propinquity to find) goes on to talk to her lover (or rather, the one she wants to be her lover) rather than us. Now, whether she's actually preparing herself to talk to him, i.e. talking to herself and thinking about what she would say, or whether she really is talking to him, isn't clear. She continues to talk to him for the next couple of lines too. "Your person fair, and feel a certain zest" tells him that he's rather good-looking and that she is beginning to get a bit restless to do certain adult things with him...This idea is also continued in the following line: "To bear your bodies weight upon my breast" which is a perfect example of the *carpe diem* theme. It then changes from talking about Him to talking about how futile relationships really are by saying "So subtly is the fume of life designed". I say this because what she's trying to explain is that if this relationships is like a fume, it's volatile, unstable, and, as I've said before, can evaporate at any moment over the slightest thing. In the next line she tells us of what love is doing to her: "To clarify the pulse and cloud the mind". Her heart beats faster whenever they're near, or whenever she thinks of him, she's beginning to lust after him. However, it means that she isn't thinking properly and may do something she regrets. Then, she tells us the consequences of this lust "And leave me once again undone, possessed." Undone may either refer to her falling apart after she realises that he doesn't love her back, or she's literally left undone (her clothes anyway). Possessed is similar because it could either mean that she is, or could be, being controlled by him i.e. Patriarchal society. Or it refers to her being so in love she'd do anything without a second thought. It is then after this, that we come to the break where we see her changing from being helpless and the submissive one in the relationship to the strong and dominant one. Her tone also changes, or I imagine so, when she speaks as such: "Think not for this however, the poor treason". To me it sounds as though she lifts her chin and says it in a really condescending manner, and she then says, never mind what I just did, because I wasn't myself. "of my stout blood against my staggering brain" which is the next line and an obvious reference to an earlier quote "clarify the pulse and cloud the mind". In other words, her strong, beating blood every time he was near (the lust) against her staggering brain, (the not-thinking-straight) and it was like the two were battling it out to see who would win. By the looks of things, the brain did, eventually. Part of this is also parenthesis. The "however, think not for the poor treason of my stout blood against my staggering brain" is just extra information, because the poem would make just as much sense if it had continued on with "I shall remember you with love, or season". This definitely confirms that she has taken back control of the relationship and that it actually means nothing anymore. She basically says to him "just because we've had sex, it doesn't mean I love you". She continues on with this idea as such: "My scorn with pity, - let me make it plain" I.e. she won't be nice to him, she's enjoying being the dominant one now, and she is mocking the relationship by mocking it. "I find this frenzy insufficient reason" where the frenzy is the reference to the relationship and the whole heart-ruling-head scenario. Then she says "reason for conversation when we meet again." In other words, she isn't going to talk to him again, and this shows

she's keeping control. "Just because I felt all of those feelings, it doesn't mean I'll speak with you again, so get over it" is what she's really saying.

I feel that she has managed to express her thoughts, views and emotions in a variety of ways to great effect. In just fourteen lines she has managed to say so much, by saying so little, which I think is one heck of an achievement. She has explored several themes, both political and personal, which some women (or men) could relate to, and if they do then they probably understand the poem a bit better than someone who doesn't. I, myself can relate to some of it, so I see a different perspective of this poem to some others, and I can understand where she is coming from, so I feel a bit closer to her than others might. All in all, I enjoyed it.

Talking in Bed  
By Philips Larkin

Talking in bed ought to be easiest,  
Lying together there goes back so far,  
An emblem of two people being honest.

Yet more and more time passes silently.  
Outside, the wind's incomplete unrest  
Builds and disperses clouds in the [sky](#),

And dark towns heap up on the [horizon](#).  
None of this cares for us. Nothing shows why  
At this unique distance from isolation

It becomes still more difficult to find  
Words at once true and kind,  
Or not untrue and not unkind.

**Analysis 1**

Philip Larkin is considered one of the greatest English poets of all time. He graduated Oxford with a degree in English Language and Literature, and eventually became the librarian of the University of Hull's library, a position he held for thirty years. Larkin began his poetic career heavily influenced by W.B. Yeats, but after WWII he became inspired by Thomas Hardy's "rugged language, local settings, and ironic tone" (Greenblatt 2565). Larkin's [poetry](#) began to describe everyday situations and people; in fact, he is famously quoted as saying that "poetry is an affair of sanity, of seeing things as they are; I don't want to transcend the commonplace, I love the commonplace life. Everyday things are lovely to me" (2566). One of his favorite themes, the failure of love, is used in his poem "Talking in Bed." In this poem, there is a definite sense of disconnect between the couple, and it is clear that the metaphorical wall between them has been building up for a long time. The narrator questions how and why their relationship failed; was it because their relationship was based on dishonesty? Or did their marriage fail because marriage is a flawed institution?

*Talking in bed ought to be easiest,*

*Lying together there goes back so far,*

*An emblem of two people being honest. (lines 1-3)*

The marriage bed is a typical emblem (symbolized) for a marriage; it is supposed to be a sacred and safe place for spouses to come together as one. The marriage bed should be the place where a couple feels the most connected, but in this poem, the marriage bed makes the couple's detachment from one another screamingly obvious. The word "lying" has a twofold meaning in this poem; on one hand it means that the couple in assuming a horizontal position together, and on the other hand, it means that there is some untruthfulness or falsehood between the couple. "Goes back so far" also has a double meaning: first, the couple has been "lying together" in their bed for years (they have been married a long time); and second, they have been dishonest with each other for years.

This poem was written in the early 1960s, divorce was still largely viewed as scandalous. It was considered disgraceful, especially for women, to give up on their marriages; so many people stayed in unhappy marriages. Many people of the time

believed that couples had a duty and obligation to stay together for their children, and sacrifice was just part of entering into a marriage contract and having children. It wasn't until the late 1960s and early 1970s that a new idea emerged that stressed individual fulfillment over marital or societal obligations. It is also important to remember that women were not able to be as independent as they are today; most women were homemakers, and did not have the degree or qualifications to work in the public sector. In the past, the only way to get out of a marriage was to fabricate outlandish wrongdoings by your spouse. In the United States, this all changed when Governor Reagan introduced no-fault divorce, in 1969 (Wilcox).

*Yet more and more time passes silently.*

*Outside, the wind's incomplete unrest*

*Builds and disperses clouds about the sky, (4-6)*

The second stanza offers a nature metaphor to describe the ups and downs of marriage. The awkward silence suggests that there is a lot of tension between the two, which only increases as they continue to remain silent. The "outside" mirrors the couple inside; the pressure builds and builds between them, and is never alleviated. The wind is in a constant state of turmoil, spreading clouds across the sky. "Builds and disperses" could be a metaphor for an argument; tension builds, and has to be either released or repressed, in this situation I would say that the tension is repressed (unresolved). "Clouds" have both a dark and threatening aspect, and has the ability to obscure. Metaphorically speaking, if the sky was clear then the marriage would be peaceful, but clouds insinuate that the marriage is riddled with problems; these problems could potentially harm the marriage, so the clouds obscure them, if you can't see something then it doesn't exist.

*And dark towns heap up on the horizon.*

*None of this cares for us. Nothing shows why*

*At this unique distance from isolation (7-9)*

"Dark towns" can symbolize a number of different things: impediments, arguments, problems, loneliness, pain, etc. This darkness gathers up on the horizon (range of

outlook or experience) as a looming reminder of the couple's future. Nature doesn't care about their relationship; it is up to them to figure things out. The narrator doesn't understand why their marriage has failed; why at "this unique distance" (lying side-by-side) that they feel so isolated from each other.

*It becomes still more difficult to find*

*Words at once true and kind,*

*Or not untrue and not unkind. (10-12)*

He doesn't understand why the words are not coming to them. Is there nothing left to say? Is the marriage that far gone? He is having trouble remembering the "true and kind" words that at one time he felt for his spouse; did he ever even mean those words that he once spoke? Was their marriage based on a lie? This poem offers no solution or answers, which allows people to relate to this situation better. There is no blanket answer to why a marriage fails, because each relationship is different and has its own problems. Perhaps this poem is a wake-up call for those who are falling into silence, warning them before it is too late to make things better. Sometimes the hardest conversations to have are the ones that involve change, personal and situational.

## ANALYSIS 2

Analysis of the poem "Talking in Bed" by Philip Larkin

Love is an important factor in physical and emotional relationships. The word love can refer to a variety of different states and attitudes - this diversity of meaning, combined with the complexity of the feelings involved, makes love difficult to define, even compared to other emotional states. All of us have been in love at least once and has tasted all the good things that love brings along with bitter ones and disappointment.

Many of Philip Larkin's poems also focus on the concept of love, as the poem "Talking in Bed", written in 1964, which is a story about a failing relationship between two people isolated from each other and who find it difficult to communicate. The first thing I noticed about this poem was the title "Talking in Bed", suggesting that the closeness of being together in the bed (a place of intimacy)

should make it easy to talk “Talking in bed ought to be easiest” (line 1). However, this couple seems to have trouble communicating “Lying together there goes far back” (line 2), as they do not say a word to each other. Only what remains is an emblem “An emblem of two people being honest” (line 3) – which signifies cruel present reality. This suggests the title and the whole poem is ironic. The word lying “Lying together there goes back so far” (line 2) is ambiguous as it could mean both “sleeping/lying in bed together” or “telling lies over a period of time”. Larkin obviously does not believe that love could last forever and can be a disappointment.

The sense of broken communication and isolation is well displayed through the structure and form of the poem. The poem consists of twelve lines, predominantly in the iambic pentameter, divided into three tercets, rhyming ABA CAC DCD, and a final tercet rhyming EEE, what portray the absence of continuity and the broken-up nature of the couple's discourse.

The second stanza opens with the line - containing alliteration - “Yet more and more time passes silently” (line 4) – which gives us a sense of human stagnation in contrast with nature “Outside, the wind's incomplete unrest / Builds and disperses clouds about the sky” (line 5,6). It could be that the couple in this poem has been in a relationship for a long time or possibly be married; but in contrary - while their time's passing in silence – the wind is active all the time. Larkin uses nature to describe what is happening outside - while the outside world continues as normal – the inside world remains in its isolation. Moreover, Larkin shows contempt and dislike for modern life by touching the problematic values of human communication. Nowadays, communicating with a person is something many people could possibly relate to, as it is a problem often seen in every day life.

As in second stanza Larkin also uses imagery of the nature and environment at the beginning of third stanza “And dark towns heap up on the horizon” (line 7), but this time the focus is not on natural objects but rather on man-made aspects of the environment. As seen in line 7 the environment, suggested by dark towns, does not bring satisfactory fulfilments in human expectations. Human involvement is even more obvious in the last two lines of third stanza “None of this cares for us. Nothing shows why / At this unique distance from isolation” (line 8,9). Larkin emphasises the desperation of situation between these two people gathered in one place where they could truly be themselves, but they are at a loss.

In fourth stanza “It becomes still more difficult to find / Words at once true and kind” (line 10,11) as well as in the third stanza “...Nothing shows why / At this unique distance from isolation” (line 9) there is enjambment – the breaking of a syntactic unit by the end of a line, which stresses alienation, failure and isolation.

As Larkin suggests, “It becomes more difficult to find / Words once true and kind” (line 10,11), it could be difficult for these two people to express verbally how they feel or it could be also possible that they spoke about the relationship, which has hurt



them emotionally and they created the isolation, although words kind and true both relate with human language in positive manner. The double negative not + un “Or not untrue and not unkind” (line 12) leaves the reader ambiguous feeling of unfulfilled desire. Very similar situation is in line 9 “At this unique distance from isolation”, suggesting that someone can be distanced from isolation and ironically very close at the same time.

Larkin’s poem “Talking in bed” enables us to relate to possible common experiences in our own lives and provoke us to think about both – the gap between expectations and reality – and irony of love in modern world. However, an irony, one of the dominant features in this poem, gives us the opportunity to create our own perception of love. I think Larkin believed that love is a positive thing, but we all know that reality makes nothing simple and often confront us with painful disappointment.

ESSOP PATEL (1943 - 2007) - In the Shadow of Signal Hill

A short, yet powerful call for violent revolution against Apartheid laws. Look at the IMAGERY and its IMPLICATIONS, as well as the TITLE and lack of PUNCTUATION/CAPITALISATION. Remember our geography quiz? District 6 is associated with forced removals, Langa is a township near the airport (where many black evicted residents might have gone) and Robben Island (where the "heroes" call from) is easily visible from Signal Hill. Signal Hill itself is famous for the noonday gun - a military symbol of the passing of time. What kind of alternate militant symbols of passing time are being called for in the poem?

SIPHO SEPAMLA (1932 - 2007) - The Loneliness Beyond

As for the Stephen Watson poem, a freebie tip is to look at the sentence length. When stanzas speak of the 'male rain' (with all traditional Patriarchal connotations of strength, activity and violence), Watson uses short, abrupt and often exclamatory sentences. When the 'female rain' is spoken of, however, the sentences become longer, more flowing and separated by commas. There are more lower case letters beginning each line, mimicking the gentleness of the rain. In this way, Watson has employed mimesis (art imitating life) to make how the poem is written reflect what the poem is about.

## Ozymandias

By Percy Bysshe Shelley 1792–1822 Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveller from an antique land,  
Who said—“Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;  
And on the pedestal, these words appear:  
My name is Ozymandias Ozymandias Pharaoh Rameses II (reigned 1279-1213 BCE).  
According to the OED, the statue was once 57 feet tall., King of Kings;  
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.”

## Ozymandias

Percy-Bysshe Shelley

"Ozymandias" is a sonnet, a poem with fourteen lines.

"Ozymandias" has two settings. The first is the place where the narrator meets the traveler (line 1); the second is the setting in the traveler's tale about a crumbling statue of an Egyptian king (pharaoh). The statue is at the site of the ancient Egyptian capital, Thebes (about 420 miles south of Cairo). On the eastern side of the river was the city proper. On the western side was a vast cemetery, or city of the dead, where statues, temples, and tombs memorialized the pharaohs. Living at the site were priests who conducted religious services and artisans and laborers who designed, built, and maintained the monuments.

Narrator: The poet, Shelley. He assumes the role of auditor to the tale of the traveler (line 1) and tells the reader what the traveler said.

Traveler: A person from an ancient land who tells his tale to the narrator.

Ozymandias: Egyptian Pharaoh who is the subject of the traveler's tale. *Ozymandias* (also spelled *Osymandias*) is another name for one of Egypt's most famous rulers, Ramses II (or Ramses the Great). He was born in 1314 BC and ruled Egypt for 66 years as the third king of the Nineteenth Dynasty. His exact age at death is uncertain, but it was between 90 and 99. Ramses was a warrior king and a builder of temples, statues and other monuments. He was pharaoh at the time Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, as recounted in the second book of the Bible, *Exodus*.

The might and majesty of a king does not last; only great art endures. The statue, symbolizing the power and glory of the pharaoh, is crumbling. Yet the arrogant sneer on the "shattered visage" remains intact as a testament to the ability of the sculptor to read and capture the passions of his ruler. Thus, it is the pharaoh's lowly servant, the sculptor, who delivers the more powerful message here. The king's message "look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair" is an ironic indictment of his pride.

Oddly, Shelley's theme—valid as a general statement—does not ultimately apply to Ozymandias, or Ramses II. For Ramses remains today perhaps the most famous of Egyptian pharaohs. After thousands of years, he continues to intrigue historians, archeologists, and other scholars. In addition, many of the monuments erected during his rule still stand.

## **ANALYSIS 2**

### Summary

The speaker recalls having met a traveler "from an antique land," who told him a story about the ruins of a statue in the desert of his native country. Two vast legs of stone stand without a body, and near them a massive, crumbling stone head lies "half sunk" in the sand. The traveler told the speaker that the frown and "sneer of cold command" on the statue's face indicate that the sculptor understood well the emotions (or "passions") of the statue's subject. The memory of those emotions survives "stamped" on the lifeless statue, even though both the sculptor and his subject are both now dead. On the pedestal of the statue appear the words, "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: / Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" But around the decaying ruin of the statue, nothing remains, only the "lone and level sands," which stretch out around it.

### Form

"Ozymandias" is a sonnet, a fourteen-line poem metered in iambic pentameter. The rhyme scheme is somewhat unusual for a sonnet of this era; it does not fit a conventional Petrarchan pattern, but instead interlinks the octave (a term for the first eight lines of a sonnet) with the sestet (a term for the last six lines), by gradually replacing old rhymes with new ones in the form ABABACDCEDEFEF.

### Commentary

This sonnet from 1817 is probably Shelley's most famous and most anthologized poem—which is somewhat strange, considering that it is in many ways an atypical poem for Shelley, and that it touches little upon the most important themes in his oeuvre at large (beauty, expression, love, imagination). Still, "Ozymandias" is a masterful sonnet. Essentially it is devoted to a single metaphor: the shattered, ruined

statue in the desert wasteland, with its arrogant, passionate face and monomaniacal inscription (“Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!”). The once-great king’s proud boast has been ironically disproved; Ozymandias’s works have crumbled and disappeared, his civilization is gone, all has been turned to dust by the impersonal, indiscriminate, destructive power of history. The ruined statue is now merely a monument to one man’s hubris, and a powerful statement about the insignificance of human beings to the passage of time. Ozymandias is first and foremost a metaphor for the ephemeral nature of political power, and in that sense the poem is Shelley’s most outstanding political sonnet, trading the specific rage of a poem like “England in 1819” for the crushing impersonal metaphor of the statue. But Ozymandias symbolizes not only political power—the statue can be a metaphor for the pride and hubris of all of humanity, in any of its manifestations. It is significant that all that remains of Ozymandias is a work of art and a group of words; as Shakespeare does in the sonnets, Shelley demonstrates that art and language long outlast the other legacies of power.

Of course, it is Shelley’s brilliant poetic rendering of the story, and not the subject of the story itself, which makes the poem so memorable. Framing the sonnet as a story told to the speaker by “a traveller from an antique land” enables Shelley to add another level of obscurity to Ozymandias’s position with regard to the reader—rather than seeing the statue with our own eyes, so to speak, we hear about it from someone who heard about it from someone who has seen it. Thus the ancient king is rendered even less commanding; the distancing of the narrative serves to undermine his power over us just as completely as has the passage of time. Shelley’s description of the statue works to reconstruct, gradually, the figure of the “king of kings”: first we see merely the “shattered visage,” then the face itself, with its “frown / And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command”; then we are introduced to the figure of the sculptor, and are able to imagine the living man sculpting the living king, whose face wore the expression of the passions now inferable; then we are introduced to the king’s people in the line, “the hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.” The kingdom is now imaginatively complete, and we are introduced to the extraordinary, prideful boast of the king: “Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!” With that, the poet demolishes our imaginary picture of the king, and interposes centuries of ruin between it and us: “‘Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!’ / Nothing beside remains. Round the decay / Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, / The lone and level sands stretch far away

### **ANALYSIS 3**

Shelley’s friend the banker Horace Smith stayed with the poet and his wife Mary (author of *Frankenstein*) in the Christmas season of 1817. One evening, they began to discuss recent discoveries in the Near East. In the wake of Napoleon’s conquest of Egypt in 1798, the archeological treasures found there stimulated the European imagination. The power of pharaonic Egypt had seemed eternal, but now this once-great empire was (and had long been) in ruins, a feeble shadow.

Shelley and Smith remembered the Roman-era historian Diodorus Siculus, who described a statue of Ozymandias, more commonly known as Rameses II (possibly the pharaoh referred to in the Book of Exodus). Diodorus reports the inscription on the statue, which he claims was the largest in Egypt, as follows: “King of Kings Ozymandias am I. If any want to know how great I am and where I lie, let him outdo me in my work.” (The statue and its inscription do not survive, and were not seen by Shelley; his inspiration for “Ozymandias” was verbal rather than visual.)

Stimulated by their conversation, Smith and Shelley wrote sonnets based on the passage in Diodorus. Smith produced a now-forgotten poem with the unfortunate title “On a Stupendous Leg of Granite, Discovered Standing by Itself in the Deserts of Egypt, with the Inscription Inserted Below.” Shelley’s contribution was “Ozymandias,” one of the best-known sonnets in European literature.

In addition to the Diodorus passage, Shelley must have recalled similar examples of boastfulness in the epitaphic tradition. In the Greek Anthology (8.177), for example, a gigantic tomb on a high cliff proudly insists that it is the eighth wonder of the world. Here, as in the case of “Ozymandias,” the inert fact of the monument displaces the presence of the dead person it commemorates: the proud claim is made on behalf of art (the tomb and its creator), not the deceased. Though Ozymandias believes he speaks for himself, in Shelley’s poem his monument testifies against him.

“Ozymandias” has an elusive, sidelong approach to its subject. The poem begins with the word “I”—but the first person here is a mere framing device. The “I” quickly fades away in favor of a mysterious “traveler from an antique land.” This wayfarer presents the remaining thirteen lines of the poem.

The reader encounters Shelley’s poem like an explorer coming upon a strange, desolate landscape. The first image that we see is the “two vast and trunkless legs of stone” in the middle of a desert. Column-like legs but no torso: the center of this great figure, whoever he may have been, remains missing. The sonnet comes to a halt in the middle of its first quatrain. Are these fragmentary legs all that is left?

After this pause, Shelley’s poem describes a “shattered visage,” the enormous face of Ozymandias. The visage is taken apart by the poet, who collaborates with time’s ruinous force. Shelley says nothing about the rest of the face; he describes only the mouth, with its “frown,/And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command.” Cold command is the emblem of the empire-building ruler, of the tyrannical kind that Shelley despised. Ozymandias resembles the monstrous George III of our other Shelley sonnet, “England in 1819.” (Surprisingly, surviving statues of Rameses II, aka Ozymandias, show him with a mild, slightly mischievous expression, not a glowering, imperious one.)

The second quatrain shifts to another mediating figure, now not the traveler but the sculptor who depicted the pharaoh. The sculptor “well those passions read,” Shelley tells us: he intuited, beneath the cold, commanding exterior, the tyrant’s passionate rage to impose himself on the world. Ozymandias’ intense emotions “survive, stamp’d on these lifeless things.” But as Shelley attests, the sculptor survives as well, or parts of him do: “the hand that mocked” the king’s passions “and the heart that fed.” (The artist, like the tyrant, lies in fragments.) “Mocked” here has the neutral sense of “described” (common in Shakespeare), as well as its more familiar meaning, to imitate in an insulting way. The artist mocked Ozymandias by depicting him, and in a way that the ruler could not himself perceive (presumably he was satisfied with his portrait). “The heart that fed” is an odd, slightly lurid phrase, apparently referring to the sculptor’s own fervent way of nourishing himself on his massive project. The sculptor’s attitude might resemble—at any event, it certainly suits—the pharaoh’s own aggressive enjoyment of empire. Ruler and artist seem strangely linked here; the latter’s contempt for his subject does not free him from Ozymandias’ enormous shadow.

The challenge for Shelley will thus be to separate himself from the sculptor’s harsh satire, which is too intimately tied to the power it opposes. If the artistic rebel merely plays Prometheus to Ozymandias’ Zeus, the two will remain locked in futile struggle (the subject of Shelley’s great verse drama *Prometheus Unbound*). Shelley’s final lines, with their picture of the surrounding desert, are his attempt to remove himself from both the king and the sculptor—to assert an uncanny, ironic perspective, superior to the battle between ruler and ruled that contaminates both.

The sestet moves from the shattered statue of Ozymandias to the pedestal, with its now-ironic inscription: “My name is Ozymandias, king of kings./Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!” Of course, the pharaoh’s “works” are nowhere to be seen, in this desert wasteland. The kings that he challenges with the evidence of his superiority are the rival rulers of the nations he has enslaved, perhaps the Israelites and Canaanites known from the biblical account. The son and successor of Ozymandias/Rameses II, known as Merneptah, boasts in a thirteenth-century BCE inscription (on the “Merneptahstele,” discovered in 1896 and therefore unknown to Shelley) that “Israel is destroyed; its seed is gone”—an evidently overoptimistic assessment.

The pedestal stands in the middle of a vast expanse. Shelley applies two alliterative phrases to this desert, “boundless and bare” and “lone and level.” The seemingly infinite empty space provides an appropriate comment on Ozymandias’ political will, which has no content except the blind desire to assert his name and kingly reputation.

“Ozymandias” is comparable to another signature poem by a great Romantic, Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan.” But whereas Coleridge aligns the ruler’s “stately pleasure dome” with poetic vision, Shelley opposes the statue and its boast to his own powerful negative imagination. Time renders fame hollow: it counterposes to the ruler’s proud sentence a devastated vista, the trackless sands of Egypt.

Ozymandias and his sculptor bear a fascinating relation to Shelley himself: they might be seen as warnings concerning the aggressive character of human action (whether the king's or the artist's). Shelley was a ceaselessly energetic, desirous creator of poetry, but he yearned for calm. This yearning dictated that he reach beyond his own willful, anarchic spirit, beyond the hubris of the revolutionary. In his essay "On Life," Shelley writes that man has "a spirit within him at enmity with dissolution and nothingness." In one way or another, we all rebel against the oblivion to which death finally condemns us. But we face, in that rebellion, a clear choice of pathways: the road of the ardent man of power who wrecks all before him, and is wrecked in turn; or the road of the poet, who makes his own soul the lyre or Aeolian harp for unseen forces. (One may well doubt the strict binary that Shelley implies, and point to other possibilities.) Shelley's limpid late lyric "With a Guitar, to Jane" evokes wafting harmonies and a supremely light touch. This music occupies the opposite end of the spectrum from Ozymandias' futile, resounding proclamation. Similarly, in the "Ode to the West Wind," Shelley's lyre opens up the source of a luminous vision: the poet identifies himself with the work of song, the wind that carries inspiration. The poet yields to a strong, invisible power as the politician cannot.

In a letter written during the poet's affair with Jane Williams, Shelley declares, "Jane brings her guitar, and if the past and the future could be obliterated, the present would content me so well that I could say with Faust to the passing moment, 'Remain, thou, thou art so beautiful.'" The endless sands of "Ozymandias" palpably represent the threatening expanse of past and future. Shelley's poem rises from the desert wastes: it entrances us every time we read it, and turns the reading into a "now."

The critic Leslie Brisman remarks on "the way the timelessness of metaphor escapes the limits of experience" in Shelley. Timelessness can be achieved only by the poet's words, not by the ruler's will to dominate. The fallen titan Ozymandias becomes an occasion for Shelley's exercise of this most tenuous yet persisting form, poetry. Shelley's sonnet, a brief epitome of poetic thinking, has outlasted empires: it has witnessed the deaths of boastful tyrants, and the decline of the British dominion he so heartily scorned.

