CIE IGCSE English Literature 0486

Notes on Poems from “Songs of Ourselves” [Part 1]
Summary:

A horse lover (for their majesty and strength) recalls his childhood (‘childish hour’ and ‘it fades’) and his experience through the industrial revolution.

Setting: on a farm; ‘plough’, ‘mill’, ‘bare field’

Split into three parts according to time

Part 1 = Stanza 1 to 4 (Day time)
Part 2 = Stanza 5 to 6 (Dusk falls and emotions change)
Part 3 = Stanza 7 (Persona pulls away from memory and returns to reality)

Edwin Muir:

Edwin Muir was an Orcadian poet.

Remembered for his deeply felt and vivid poetry in plain language with few stylistic devices.

Significant modern poet.
HORSES

• Language:
  • Few and reiterating stylistic devices however very powerful and impactful
  • Oxymoron, ‘great hulks were seraphim of gold’ & ‘bright and fearful’
  • Simile, ‘like struggling snake’ & ‘as brilliant and as wide as night’
  • Hyperbole, ‘gigantic in the gloam’
  • Horses metaphorized as:
    • Steam train: ‘pistons’, ‘steaming nostrils’, ‘warm and glowing’, ‘smouldering’
    • Soldiers: ‘conquering’, ‘marched broad-breasted’, ‘struggling snakes’
    • Magical creatures: ‘magic power’, ‘seraphim of gold’, ‘cruel apocalyptic light’

• Structure:
  • Consistent rhyme pattern of AABB, however slightly lost in the second last stanza when a half rhyme is used instead of a full one
  • Enjambment begins in 5th stanza, ‘nostrils home They came’
HORSES

• **Sound devices:**
  - Constant rhyme pattern similar to the trot of hooves of the horses
  - Sibilance for weaker (weak sound): ‘struggling snakes’ & ‘flowed off ... in flakes’
  - Strong alliteration when describing horse: ‘broad-breasted’ & ‘gigantic ... gloam’

• **Attitudes/feelings:**
  - Threatened by horses: ‘terrible’, ‘wild and strange’, ‘watched fearful’
  - Strong and deceiving: ‘hooves like piston’, ‘yet seem as standing still’
  - Impression changes to ‘rapture, when, one furrow done’
  - Fears intensely: ‘brilliant and as wide as night’, ‘cruel apocalyptic light’, ‘leaping ire of the wind’, ‘rage invisible and blind’
  - Conclusive, back to reality: ‘Ah now, it fades! It fades!’,’ pine again’.
• Linking poems:
  • ‘Hunting Snake’ and ‘Pike’ shares the fear for subject
  • ‘Pike’, ‘Cockroach’, ‘Hunting Snake’ all poems focus on just one animal
  • ‘Pike’ and ‘Hunting Snake’ as they are memories
  • ‘Summer Farm’ and ‘Pied Beauty’, all on the same setting; farm
  • ‘Pike’ which has distinct parts with many diverse emotions
• **Summary:**
  • About pike, and the poet's feelings about them, fishing, about the brutality of some little ones he had as pets, which later grew out of control.
  • Setting: on a farm; *‘plough’, ‘mill’, ‘bare field’*

• **Split into three parts according to story**
  • Part 1 = *Stanza 1 to 4* (Factual and informative)
  • Part 2 = *Stanza 5 to 7* (Anecdote about pike kept behind glass)
  • Part 3 = *Stanza 8 to 11* (Final story about pike in a pond)

• **Ted Hughes:**
  • Was an English poet and children's writer.
  • Critics routinely rank him as one of the best poets of his generation.
  • Hughes was British Poet Laureate from 1984 until his death (1998)
  • Animals appear frequently throughout his work as deity, metaphor, persona, and icon
Pike

**Language:**
- Conventional tone and simple language, very literal
- Semantic field of evil, *killers*, *malevolent* and *horror*
- Juxtaposition, *delicacy and horror* & *lilies and muscular tench*
- Oxymoron, *still splashes*
- Repetition,
  - Repetition of *immense*: *too immense to stir, so immense and old*
  - Repetition of *eye* – watching: *outside eye stared*, *in this eye*, *for what eye*
- Hyperbole, *as deep as England*, *fifty years across*

**Structure:**
- Dramatic pause, *there were two. Finally one*
- Enjambment, *muscular tench Had outlasted*, *old That past nightfall*
• **Sound devices:**
  - No regular rhyme scheme
  - Strong alliteration ‘g’ describing pike: ‘green tigering the gold’
  - Weak sibilance suggesting subtlety: ‘silhouette of submarine’

• **Attitudes/feelings:**
  - Fear of the pike: ‘killers from the egg’, ‘malevolent … grin’, ‘I dared not cast’
  - Obsession with the creature: ‘kept behind glass’, ‘green tigering the gold’
  - Admires the pike’s power: ‘iron in this eye’, ‘two feet long’, ‘immense’

• **Linking poems:**
  - ‘Hunting snake’ as both persona’s admire the creature
  - ‘Horses’ as they are both memories
  - ‘Horses’, ‘Cockroach’, ‘Hunting snake’ as all main characters are animals
HUNTING SNAKE

• Summary:
  • A group of people are observing a passing snake
  • There is no interaction between the snake and the people
  • Setting: daytime outdoor

• Split into two parts according to emotion:
  • Part 1: *First 2 stanzas* (admiration/fascination of the creature)
  • Part 2: *Last 2 stanzas* (curiosity/apprehension of the snake’s potential ferocity)

• Judith Wright:
  • Campaigned for Aboriginal land rights
  • Wrote mostly about Australia’s land and wildlife
  • Also writes about the indigenous population of Australia
  • Known for comparing inner existence and objective reality in her poems
HUNTING SNAKE

• Language:
  • Past tense and 1st person plural suggesting that it is the persona’s memory
  • Very literal language, few language devices:
    • Personification: ‘season’s grace’
    • Hyperbole: ‘sun glazed his curves of diamond scale’
    • Juxtaposition: ‘Cold, dark and splendid’
  • Repetition
    • Repeating use of ‘breath’ for dramatic effect: ‘we lost breath’ and ‘took a deeper breath’
    • Repeating use of ‘sun’ for an affect of awe: ‘sun-warmed’ and ‘sun glazed’
    • Repeated focus on ‘eyes’ and ‘watching’: ‘watch him pass’, ‘our eyes went with him’ and ‘looked at each other’
HUNTING SNAKE

• Structure:
  • Enjambment is evident in all stanzas
  • Consistent rhyme scheme of ABAB until last stanza where it changes to ABBA
  • Suggests that the whole experience with the snake was actually scary
  • Interesting that it was realized after the snake disappeared
  • The Poem is a 4 stanza ballad

• Sound devices:
  • Alliteration: ‘we walked’, abundance of alliteration in 3rd stanza (‘w’ and ‘f’)
  • Sibilance: ‘scarcely thought; still as we stood’ emphasis on the hissing of a snake
  • Power of 3: ‘Cold, dark and splendid’
HUNTING SNAKE

• Attitudes/feelings:
  • Main three persona impressions are Fascination, Admiration and Fear
  • Fascinated by the snake: ‘lost breath to watch him pass’ and ‘great black snake’
  • Curious of the snake’s path: ‘our eyes went with him’
  • Admires the superficial beauty of the snake: ‘sun glazed his curves of diamond scale’ and ‘Cold, dark and splendid’
  • Also in fear of the snake (apprehensive): ‘froze half-through a pace’ and ‘fierce intent’
  • Marveled by the creatures presence

• Linking poems:
  • ‘The Cockroach’: shares fascination impression
  • ‘Pike’ and ‘Horses’: shares fearful impression
  • Relatable to ‘Pike’, ‘Horses’ and ‘Hunting Snake’ since they all focus on a specific animal
  • Poem tells only one story, similar to ‘The Cockroach’ different from ‘Horses’ and ‘Pike’
THE COCKROACH

• **Summary:**
  • One person is observing the movements made by a cockroach
  • There are no interactions between the person and cockroach
  • Setting: indoors (inferred from objects described in poem)

• **Split into two parts according to emotion:**
  • Part 1: *1st line to 4th line*, the cockroach is normal, idle emotions
  • Part 2: *5th line to 9th line*, the cockroach is circling then flips, apprehensive emotions
  • Part 3: *10th line to 14th line*, the cockroach stops and is uncertain, empathetic uncertain emotions

• **Kevin Halligan:**
  • Travels countries and writes about their fascinations, Asia was birthplace of this poem
  • His poems are on one level very direct but on another level very powerful
  • They often consist of a subject (such as an insect) to reflect something else (e.g. himself)
THE COCKROACH

- **Language:**
  - Literal Language, little use of language devices
  - Metaphoric: ‘*dust that rode the floor*’
  - Empathy: ‘*I recognized myself*’
  - Hyperbole: ‘*giant cockroach*’
  - Simile: ‘*As if the victim of a mild attack*’

- **Structure:** poem is a sonnet
  - Rhyme scheme starts with normal ABAB then falls apart after *8th line*, becoming ABCACB
  - This could be connected to the confusion of cockroach

- **Sound devices:**
  - Sibilance: ‘*seemed quite satisfied*’
  - Enjambment: *10th to 11th line* and *12th to 13th line*
  - Mid-Line Pause: ‘*And stopped.*’ This is a dramatic pause emphasizing the stopping
THE COCKROACH

• Attitudes/feelings:
  • The persona conveys his own life with the presence of empathy
  • Observant and fascinated by the cockroach: ‘I watched’ and ‘giant cockroach’
  • Empathetic towards the creatures uncertainty: ‘I don’t know’ and ‘I recognized myself’
  • Feels lost, similar to the cockroach: ‘looked uncertain’ and the change in the rhyme scheme
  • Feels guilty: ‘Was this due payment for some vicious crime’
  • There is evidence of using specific time scales: ‘at first’, ‘but soon’ and ‘after a while’
  • Linked to time scales in the persona’s life too

• Linking poems:
  • ‘Hunting Snake’: shares fascination impression
  • Relatable to ‘Pike’, ‘Horses’ and ‘Hunting Snake’ since they all focus on a specific animal
  • The poem tells only one story, similar to ‘Hunting Snake’ different from ‘Horses’ and ‘Pike’
PIED BEAUTY

• Summary
  • Praising God for his colorful creations
  • Consistent praise for colorfulness of creations
  • Setting: On a farm (5th line)

• Split into three parts according to topic:
  • Part 1 = Lines 1-6 (Praising color of animals/things/farm)
  • Part 2 = Lines 7-9 (Praising all things different)
  • Part 3 = Lines 10-11 (Praising Gods ability to create)

• Gerard Manley Hopkins:
  • Converted to Roman Catholic.
  • Leading Victorian Poet.
  • Known for his use of imagery.
PIED BEAUTY

- **Language:**
  - Very literal language
  - Imagery: *fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls* & *all in stipple upon trout that swim*
  - Juxtaposition: *Rose-moles*
  - Similes: *as a brinded cow*
  - Sibilance: *swift, slow, sweet, sour*

- **Structure:**
  - Constant rhyme pattern ABC for the first part of poem
  - For parts 2 & 3 of poem, rhyme pattern is lost (Note: all end in ‘C’ – consistent)
    - Part 2: DBC
    - Part 3: DC
  - No enjambment used
  - It is a 'Curtal' Sonnet (invented by Hopkins)
PIED BEAUTY

• **Sound devices:**
  • Constant alliteration is found
  • Inconsistent rhyme pattern
  • Soft sibilance ('s') used when praising Gods different creations *(9th line)*

• **Attitudes/feelings:**
  • Baffled by God's creations: 'who knows how?'
  • Religious impressions: *'Glory be to God', 'Praise him'*
  • In awe of God's creation (nature):
    • *'He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change'*
    • *'For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow'*
  • God is the center of universe
• Linking poems:
  • Summer farm: Both setting are in 'farms' and have a centre of universe
    • Summer farm = Persona
    • Pied Beauty = God
  • Horses: Both in awe.
    • Pied Beauty = awe of God
    • Horses = awe of Horses
  • Pike: Both have 3 parts that tell a story/message and are also admiration of the creature
  • Horses: Both setting also on a farm
SUMMER FARM

• Summary:
  • Persona describes what he sees on the farm.
  • Then we find out what he's actually seeing are different layers of his subconscious *(final stanza)*
  • Setting: On a farm (inferred through lexis)

• Split into two parts according to emotions
  • Part 1 = *First 2 stanzas* (calm and peaceful descriptions)
  • Part 2 = *Final 2 stanzas* (erratic and lost emotions)

• Norman MacCaig:
  • His poetry is known for its humour, simplicity of language and great popularity.
  • Won many awards e.g. Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 1986
SUMMER FARM

• Language:
  • Very figurative language
  • Similes, 'Green as glass'
  • Imagery, 'This grasshopper with plated face'
  • Juxtaposition, 'dives up again' & 'tame lightnings'
  • Grasshopper = Symbolic - his stressed self
  • Farm = Symbolic - his layers of emotion

• Structure:
  • Consistent rhyme pattern of AABB
  • Enjambment is constantly used; clearly found in every stanza.

• Sound devices:
  • Constant rhyme pattern - unchanged (shows he's hiding that he's lost in his emotions)
  • Sibilance: 'self under selves' & 'selves I stand'
SUMMER FARM

• Attitudes/feelings:
  • Calm: 'tame' & 'lie' & 'cool, soft grass'
  • Fearful of his emotions: 'Afraid of where a thought might take me'
  • Erratic and out of control, trying to hide emotions: 'grasshopper with plated face'
  • Takes time to control his emotions: 'unfolds his legs and finds himself in space'
  • He is the centre of the universe: 'centre me'
  • Different personalities: 'self under self'
  • The truth is in everything that is going on in the farm,. It's all part of his different layers of emotions (he is the centre of it all):
    • 'with metaphysic hand lift the farm like a lid'
    • 'Farm within farm, and in the centre me'
SUMMER FARM

- Linking poems:
  - Summer farm: Both setting are in 'farms' and have a center of universe
    - Summer farm = Persona
    - Pied Beauty = God
  - Cockroach: Both personas are recognizing themselves as animals.
  - Horses: Both setting also on a farm
  - Hunting Snake: consistent/constant enjambment is used in both poems.
**A BIRTHDAY**

- **Summary:**
  - The whole poem is basically the persona expressing their happiness
  - It is also a very possessive and self-centered poem in the sense that ‘my’ is repeated many times
  - Odd combination of using nature (humble) with luxury to portray happiness

- **Split into two parts according to emotions**
  - First part: 1st stanza (expressing her love in terms of nature/romantic and humble)
  - Second part: 2nd stanza (luxurious concepts but still essence of nature/snobbish)

- **Christina Rossetti:**
  - Follower of the Pre-Raphaelite movement
  - Sister to the founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood
  - Known for composing romantic and emotional poetry
  - Often had feminist concepts in her poetry
• **Language:**
  
  • Very figurative language
  • Simile: *My heart is like a singing bird/an apple tree/a rainbow shell’*
  • Personification: *apple tree… Whose boughs are bent with the thickest fruit’*
  • Hyperbole: Whole of first stanza is quite exaggerated – *my heart ... paddles in a ... sea’*
  • Repetition:
    • First stanza: *My heart is’*
    • Ending of both stanzas: *my love is come to me’*
  
• **Structure:** poem is structure like a hymn
  
  • Enjambment is recurring in all of first stanza, and last two lines in second stanza
  • Rhyme scheme is quite regular with a few inconsistencies:
    • ABCBDCEC in first stanza
    • ABCBDEFE in second stanza
A BIRTHDAY

- **Sound devices:** very few
  - Alliteration: ‘dais of silk and down’ and ‘boughs are bent’

- **Attitudes/feelings:**
  - Main three impressions are Love, Majesty and Conceit (being snobby)
  - Persona is in very a deep state of romance because his/her ‘love has come’ to him/her
  - Abundance of medieval majesty ‘with vair and purple dyes’; essence of majesty
  - The fact that his/her ‘heart is like a rainbow shell’ portrays an almost mystical image
  - The constant imperative tone (‘raise me/carve it/work it’); materialistic and snobbery
  - Suggests that her ‘love’ has given her a new life hence ‘the birthday’ of her new life

- **Linking poems:**
  - Pied Beauty, Horses, Hunting Snake, Summer Farm: all related to nature
  - Summer Farm: self-centered
  - Pied Beauty: Relatively more positive whereas the others have a major essence of negativity