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**ANNAI WOMEN’S COLLEGE**

**KARUR**

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**MODERN LITERATURE IV (1832-1945)**

**UNIT - I**

**THE SCHOLAR-GIPSY**

“The Scholar-Gipsy” was written by poet and essayist Matthew Arnold in 1853. The poem is based on a story which was found in The Vanity of Dogmatizing (1661), written by Joseph Glanvil.

The poem tells the story of a poor and disillusioned Oxford student who leaves university to join a group of traveling “gipsies” (Romani people). The Scholar-Gipsy wants not only to withdraw from his studies but also to withdraw from the modern world. He is so welcomed and becomes such a part of the "gipsy" family that they reveal some of their secrets to him. When he is discovered by two of his former Oxford peers, he tells them of how the Romani have their own unique way of learning. He plans to stay with them to learn as much as he can from them. He will then share their wisdom with the world, although he does not wish to return to that world himself.

Arnold begins his poem by describing a rural setting just outside of Oxford. The speaker watches as a shepherd and reapers work in a field there. The speaker remains, enjoying the view of the fields and Oxford in the distance until the sun sets, his book lying beside him. Although the story (1661) was written two hundred years before the poem (1853), local people still claim to see the scholar-gipsy walking on the Berkshire moors:

This said, he left them, and return'd no more.—

But rumours hung about the country-side,

That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,

Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,

In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,

The same the gipsies wore.

The speaker even claims to have seen this shadowy figure himself. He questions whether the scholar-gipsy could really still be alive after two centuries, but he also does not believe the scholar-gipsy could have died, as the legendary figure has turned his back on the everyday modern world and mortal life:

Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,

Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.

The speaker ends the poem by appealing to the scholar-gipsy to avoid mortals in case he should be infected by the disease of modernity.

Wave us away, and keep thy solitude!

**Summary**

Matthew Arnold’s “The Scholar-Gipsy,” the major British Victorian poet’s central poem, anticipates the crisis of the modernist period. The poem is testament to Arnold’s preoccupation as a poet and a cultural critic: “this strange disease of modern life.” Arnold returns to this theme throughout his work, including in his poetic masterpieces Thyrsis (1866) and “Dover Beach” (1867) and in his major work of prose criticism, Culture and Anarchy (1869). “The Scholar-Gipsy” serves as a template for Arnold’s poetic and intellectual career and epitomizes his paradoxical combination of Victorian vigor and social progressivism with a protomodernist sense of dissociation arising from religious doubt, social fragmentation, and ennui.

Written in a ten-line stanzaic pattern for a total of 250 lines, the poem is a major English pastoral elegy in the tradition of John Milton’s “Lycidas” (1637) and Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751). It bears the imprint of Arnold’s classicism, with allusions to Vergil’s Aeneid (c. 29-19 b.c.e.; English translation, 1553) and its masterful conclusion in the form of an epic simile. At the same time, however, Arnold seems to undermine the sense of tradition, poetic or cultural, that he is seeking to maintain. The traditional pastoral elegy seeks to reaffirm a continuity between past and present and between the person who has died and the still-existing values that he or she had embodied.

**PASTORAL ELEMENTS IN SCHOLAR GYPSY**

Pastoral is a literary term that idealizes rural life, the countryside, and the natural world. As a literary mode, the pastoral depicts the everyday moments of rustic and common life. Often, the pastoral is contrasted to the rough, dirty, corrupt nature of city life. In “The Scholar-Gipsy” Arnold opens his poem by engaging the shepherd, an icon often used in pastoral imagery. The word “pastoral” is derived from the Latin “pastor” which means “to shepherd.” Thus, it is no coincidence that the shepherd is the dominant image at the opening of Arnold’s poem.

Later, Arnold engages the pastoral mode by romanticizing the Oxford countryside in the third stanza. Here, the speaker highlights the scent of the lindens with their “perfumed showers” and the bower, created by foliage, which offers solace and refuge. The speaker describes the Oxford countryside as the place where he spent his happiest days. The Oxford countryside is not only important to the speaker, but to Arnold as well. Arnold, like the scholar in the poem, felt himself torn between being a poet and maintaining a middle-class life style. Arnold turns to the pastoral to help him work through this complication.

Other examples of pastoral imagery occur in the seventh stanza, where Arnold invokes the image of boys at work in the wheat fields, the grass meadows, the sunshine, and the warm, green-muffled Cumner hills. Also, in the ninth stanza, the speaker tells of the maidens who complete the May dance around the elm, which is a reference to the pagan fertility ritual. It is also important to note the change in tone, beginning in stanza 15. Here, the speaker realizes that although Glanvil’s story of the scholar is over 200 years old, the scholar’s spirit and imagination are still alive. The speaker spends the remaining stanzas of the poem contrasting the life of the living scholar to those of ordinary mortals. This is notable in stanza 21 as the speaker expresses the living scholar in terms of moonlight, flowers and dew.

**THEME**

The pastoralism of the poem leads immediately to several themes. Most generally it represents, as it does for many poets, an escape from the intolerable world of court or affairs. Arnold certainly romanticizes the Oxford countryside, attributing to it his happiest days. Against this romantic background, then, Arnold places the quest for and of the scholar-gypsy, which gives added significance to the background. As a broad generalization, the scholar (and Arnold) seek the meaning of life. Since for Arnold Christianity was dead, and there seemed nothing to take its place giving meaning to life, the result is a constant search and intense loneliness and emptiness in life. Another general way of phrasing all this is that it presents the wisdom of the heart against the wisdom of the head. The head sees the true condition of the modern world, but the heart is drawn to the simpler, more unified life represented by the scholar and Oxford.

The poem itself is much more specific. The countryside is a specific one, well-known and loved by Arnold; the legend of the scholar-gypsy had special meaning for him. The scholar represents a side of Arnold that was at odds with the way in which he had to live his life. Arnold felt himself tugged to and fro by the demands of the world. He believed sincerely that his need to function in the modern world had killed him as a poet. His status as a family man, as an inspector of schools, and as the self-dedicated instructor of the middle-class obliged him to live and work in the world of hurry, change, and debate, while he desired calm and singleness of purpose. It is worthy of note that the only italicized words in the whole poem are in line 152, “Thou hadst one aim, one business, one desire”—emphasizing the poet’s desire for singleness of purpose.

While Arnold certainly seeks something that will supply meaning for life, what the poem specifically emphasizes is that the poet seeks a way of life analogous to that of the scholar.

**FRA LIPPO LIPPI**

Fra Lippo Lippi,” another of Browning’s dramatic monologues, appeared in the 1855 collection Men and Women. Fra (Brother) Lippo Lippi was an actual Florentine monk who lived in the fifteenth century. He was a painter of some renown, and Browning most probably gained familiarity with his works during the time he spent in Italy. “Fra Lippo Lippi” introduces us to the monk as he is being interrogated by some Medici watchmen, who have caught him out at night. Because Lippo’s patron is Cosimo de Medici, he has little to fear from the guards, but he has been out partying and is clearly in a mood to talk. He shares with the men the hardships of monastic life: he is forced to carry on his relationships with women in secret, and his superiors are always defeating his good spirits. But Lippo’s most important statements concern the basis of art: should art be realistic and true-to-life, or should it be idealistic and didactic? Should Lippo’s paintings of saints look like the Prior’s mistress and the men of the neighborhood, or should they evoke an otherworldly surreality? Which kind of art best serves religious purposes? Should art even serve religion at all? Lippo’s rambling speech touches on all of these issues.

**Form**

“Fra Lippo Lippi” takes the form of blank verse—unrhymed lines, most of which fall roughly into iambic pentameter. As in much of his other poetry, Browning seeks to capture colloquial speech, and in many parts of the poem he succeeds admirably: Lippo includes outbursts, bits of songs, and other odds and ends in his rant. In his way Browning brilliantly captures the feel of a late-night, drunken encounter.

**Commentary**

The poem centers thematically around the discussion of art that takes place around line 180. Lippo has painted a group of figures that are the spitting image of people in the community: the Prior’s mistress, neighborhood men, etc. Everyone is amazed at his talent, and his great show of talent gains him his place at the monastery. However, his talent for depicting reality comes into conflict with the stated religious goals of the Church. The Church leadership believes that their parishioners will be distracted by the sight of people they know within the painting: as the Prior and his cohorts say, “ ‘Your business is not to catch men with show, / With homage to the perishable clay.../ Make them forget there’s such a thing as flesh. / Your business is to paint the souls of men.’ ” In part the Church authorities’ objections stem not from any real religious concern, but from a concern for their own reputation: Lippo has gotten a little too close to the truth with his depictions of actual persons as historical figures—the Prior’s “niece” (actually his mistress) has been portrayed as the seductive Salome. However, the conflict between Lippo and the Church elders also cuts to the very heart of questions about art: is the primary purpose of Lippo’s art—and any art—to instruct, or to delight? If it is to instruct, is it better to give men ordinary scenes to which they can relate, or to offer them celestial visions to which they can aspire? In his own art, Browning himself doesn’t seem to privilege either conclusion; his work demonstrates only a loose didacticism, and it relies more on carefully chosen realistic examples rather than either concrete portraits or abstractions. Both Fra Lippo’s earthly tableaux and the Prior’s preferred fantasias of “ ‘vapor done up like a new-born babe’ ” miss the mark. Lippo has no aspirations beyond simple mimesis, while the Prior has no respect for the importance of the quotidian. Thus the debate is essentially empty, since it does not take into account the power of art to move man in a way that is not intellectual but is rather aesthetic and emotional.

Lippo’s statements about art are joined by his complaints about the monastic lifestyle. Lippo has not adopted this lifestyle by choice; rather, his parents’ early death left him an orphan with no choice but to join the monastery. Lippo is trapped between the ascetic ways of the monastery and the corrupt, fleshly life of his patrons the Medicis. Neither provides a wholly fulfilling existence. Like the kind of art he espouses, the Prior’s lifestyle does not take basic human needs into account. (Indeed, as we know, even the Prior finds his own precepts impossible to follow.) The anything-goes morality of the Medicis rings equally hollow, as it involves only a series of meaningless, hedonistic revels and shallow encounters. This Renaissance debate echoes the schism in Victorian society, where moralists and libertines opposed each other in fierce disagreement. Browning seems to assert that neither side holds the key to a good life. Yet he concludes, as he does in other poems, that both positions, while flawed, can lead to high art: art has no absolute connection to morality.

Fra Lippo Lippi, which basically means "Brother" Lippo Lippi, is a monk who has been up to some rather un-monk-like activities. The guardsmen of the powerful (and don't forget rich) house of Medici catch him out, partying it up on the streets, and so they roughly interrogate him.

Being drunk, Lippo is only too happy to give them the story. And by that, we mean his entire life's story. He starts from the time he was a poor orphan, literally duking it out with dogs in the streets for their leftovers. He grows into an artistically-gifted monk that at least has a stable roof over his head and food in his belly.

The Prior and the other higher-up monks don't like his art, though. They think it's too realistic, that it doesn't give proper attention to what's really important: the soul and glorification of God. Needless to say, Lippo doesn't agree. To show that he's a rebel with a cause, he sneaks out at night and parties, enjoying the company of women of ill repute.

Throughout his drunken ramblings, Lippo tosses in some of his own philosophies about art and its purpose, and how his ideas differ from those of the Church and even his powerful patron, Cosimo Medici. It's hard to please both himself and his two very different masters, but he's working on a painting that will do just that—if he's able to pull it off.

Section 1, Lines 1-44

This poem is a dramatic monologue, which means you have to imagine the whole thing in quotation marks. Brother Lippo never drops the mic, though. It's through the stuff he says that we have to figure out what's actually happening in the poem. No one else gets to speak, but their questions are implied by responses like, "Who am I?" And their actions are implied by Lippo's real-time observation. "Take your hand away that's fiddling on my throat" (13-14), for instance, means that these guards are being kinda rough with him.

We learn that Lippo is a monk at the local Carmine monastery, but instead of holing up for the night with a bit of scripture and a cup of hot milk, he's been hitting a sketchy area of the town and visiting the "sportive ladies" (yes—probably ladies of the evening, to put it politely) till the wee hours. Unfortunately, he's just been detained by a group of guardsmen and is trying to sweet-talk his way out of a tough situation.

He doesn't have an alibi for his night-time fun times, so instead Lippo relies on his monk-ness ("Hey, I'm a good guy, just ask round at my cloister!") and his higher social standing to keep himself out of hot water. "Aha, you know your betters!" (12) he says to the cops once they've lit his face up with the torch. Plus, he's been staying with Cosimo Medici (head on over to the "Shout Outs" section for more info), a seriously high-end dude who ordered a lot of art from the real-life Lippo.

Of course, no one likes being nabbed by the police and Lippo is no exception. He calls these cops "knaves," "hang-dogs," and even "Judas" (21, 25, 27). Like those fishermen that trawl around for shrimp but end up catching a whole lotta other stuff like dolphins and sea turtles, these guys have swept the streets for baddies but landed an innocent monk as well. Lippo's no "pilchard" (a type of gross fish) to be caught at their whim.

This metaphor means that he's seriously unhappy.

And yet he totes claims that he's not angry at all. He even offers to buy the dudes a drink if they ever come by his monastery. But he still sounds pretty ticked off when he describes how he'd like to paint one of them as a murderous slave, dangling John the Baptist's head in one hand and a bloody sword in the other. Yeah—that's pretty harsh.

Still, since there's no chalk handy, this vision has to go unpainted. Even without chalk, though, one of the cops seems to recognize Lippo as the famous painter. Lippo immediately turns the full-beam of charm on him, invites him to sit down easy-like, and starts to tell him his life story."You can't know exactly why I happen to be out past the city curfew in suspicious circumstances until you know about my first birthday party and fifth-grade dance," is kind of the argument.

One more point about the form here, before we move on. Notice any rhyming? Nope, neither do we. This is written in a form called blank verse, which really means that it's unrhymed iambic pentameter. For more on what all that means, head on over to "Form and Meter."

Lines 45-80

It's springtime, the good monk points out. And what's usually associated with springtime? Try birds chirping, bees buzzing, and animals pairing up for mating. And don't forget about carnival, the raucous party season preceding Lent. During this time, Lippo points out, merry bands of people group together and roam the streets Bourbon Street style.

One evening, when Lippo had been cloistered up in his room for three weeks painting boring old saints (and saints… and saints—check out the repetition in lines 48-49 that Browning uses to replicate a feeling of serious tedium), he sticks his head out the window to get some fresh air, and hears the revelers down below playing lutes and belting out the medieval Italian equivalent of pop music.

One particular face that looks up at him... and, well, zooks! What in the world does "zooks" mean, you ask? Lippo has been using it an awful lot. This is short for "gadzooks," a mild exclamation of the time—kind of like a mild curse word. It comes from "God's hooks," meaning the nails that held Jesus to the cross. So, this is sort of like saying "Gosh darn it!" It's one example of Browning's colloquial style, his attempt to recreate the everyday speech patterns that would have been the norm of the time.

Anyway: zooks! It must be some hottie down there that attracts the good monk. He's just flesh and blood, after all—not made of steel. So, naturally, he shreds all available cloth in the room and makes a ladder to climb down out of his window to join in the fun. Browning uses some consonance here, repeating the S sound: "Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped" (65). Read it aloud and you'll see how the whispering sound of the S lends a sort of secretive sound to the line, emphasizing how Lippo attempts to make a clean getaway. Check out "Sound Check" for more on this poem's sounds.

Lippo follows the merry band of party people and joins in the festivities near the Saint Laurence, the church where the Medicis are buried. It would seem the monk is welcomed with open arms, since he's greeted with "Hail fellow, well met!" It's just too bad that Lippo is caught by this guardsman and his sidekicks on his way back to the cloister. He's not looking forward to painting boring old St. Jerome (the "Shout Outs" section is your friend here).

Even though the head honcho guard seems to be in a good mood (his eyes are "twinkling"), he's kind of shaking his head that a monk could get up to such goings on. That's something they're definitely not supposed to do, since they've taken vows of chastity and obedience (both of which the good Fra seems to have broken on this night). "Don't get all Judgy McJudgerson on me," Lippo appears to say to the guard. Plus, if Cosimo Medici happens to come on the scene right now, he'll thank the kindly guardsman to keep his gob shut.

Besides: why is Lippo a beast if he can't be allowed to let his inner animal come out and play sometimes?

Lines 81-128

It's a hard knock life for Fra Lippo Lippi. Check out this sob story: he was orphaned and basically starved in the streets. For two years all he lived off of was trash, but not just any trash: "fig-skins, melon parings, rinds and shucks" (84). These are the outsides of fruits and veggies after all the good parts have been eaten. So, there's a focus here on the surface of things without the depth (the thing that's important).

His poor old auntie (Aunt Lapaccia raised him, but was too poor to care for him) snatches him up (and check out how he's wary of her other hand, which as a "stinger" probably hits the boy on a regular basis) and marches him down to the local monastery .So, at the tender age of eight years old, Lippo finds himself taking vows to become a monk and to renounce the material world and all of its sinful temptations.

We get the idea that, had the monk asked him to renounce the mouthful of bread that Lippo worries about in line 96, the answer would have been a resounding, "NO!" However, the monk's portliness is promising, and he's wiping his mouth as if just having finished eating. Things are looking up for little Lippo.

Major irony alert. Lippo is asked to give up the things that he doesn't have in the first place: wealth and status suggested by the "Palace, farm, villa, shop, and banking-house" (99). This is kind of like making a virtue of necessity. He doesn't have those things to renounce, but he needs food, which he's going to get… by swearing to renounce it.

Plus, he gets a nice robe with a rope belt and lots of free time to boot—score.

Not so fast—the monks want to see what little Lippo can do. He's not much for book-learnin', and he admits it would have been a sheer waste of time to have attempted to teach him Latin. All the Latin he cares about, though is "amo," which means "I love." It would seem Lippo is quite the ladykiller. Have you noticed how he keeps inserting love song lyrics into his monologue? That's definitely not something a monk should have his mind on.

There's a silver lining for every cloud, we guess. One good thing that comes out of starving in the streets of Florence is that Lippo learns how to read people. He learns how to notice the small details that will let him know if he's going to get food from a person, or a kick. His finely attuned senses make him aware of the churchmen who will let him take some of the wax dripping from the processional candles to re-sell, and who will call the guards to have him tried for theft.

And here Lippo gets a bit ashamed. Check out the use of the hyphens to suggest a sudden shift in thought at line 122. "How say I?" suggests he's struggling to tell us the next issue: how he learns to recognize which dogs will let him have their rotten ("offal") leftovers and which will bite him for his trouble. The image of eight-year-old Lippo battling it out with a cur in the streets for a meat-stripped bone really builds on our sympathy for this poor kid.

The "hunger-pinch" (126) is another vivid image that reinforces how Lippo's finely-tuned ability to notice how the outward, physical appearance of people suggest something of their inner temperament—just like the hunger pains are an inner sensation that links to the outer physical world that the little boy observes.

Lines 129-171

Lippo takes this ability he gains through his hunger pains and puts it to work: he starts to draw. And by this we mean pretty much everywhere. He draws all over his schoolbooks (the "antiphonary's marge" means the margins of his church service book), makes faces out of capital letters, draws little pictures of the world in his Latin book, and then starts drawing on the walls, doors, and benches.

The monks don't take too kindly to this. They look "black," which means angry.

The Prior (the head honcho monk) comes to the kid's rescue, though (and we get a sort of dramatic monologue within a dramatic monologue here in lines 136-141, when we hear the Prior speak in Lippo's defense). He disagrees that Lippo should be thrown back out onto the streets.

Instead, the Prior suggests they "lose a crow and catch a lark" (137), which roughly means they'll train Lippo for something better. And that something turns out to be the monastery's artist. After all, the Camaldolese monks and the Dominicans (the "Preaching Friars") have artists that paint their churches up to look good. Why can't the Carmelites? The Prior wants Lippo to "put the front" on the Church. So, basically, Lippo's job is to give it a good outer appearance, which is an image that fits in well with the fruit and vegetable rinds back at line 84. And with that, the Prior gives little Lippo permission to paint away. Here, the old Lippo calls it "daub," which suggests a more frivolous action, and has the effect of making him seem humble.

First, Lippo paints all kinds of monks, both those that wear black robes (Benedictine monks) and those that wear white (Cistercian monks).

Then he starts painting all of the regular Joes (and Josephines) who come into the church: from the old woman who is confessing to petty thievery, to a man who has just murdered another man's son. While Browning is dealing with words here, he still creates a vivid picture through using present participles. The phrases "shaking a fist" and "signing himself" (154-155) give readers the impression the scene is taking place right before their eyes, and creates a poetically vivid parallel to the realism of Lippo's paintings.

Lippo's fellow monks gather round in amazement at his mad painting skills. They recognize all of the figures on his bit of wall, and remark on how life-like everything is. "It's the life!" one exclaims (171).

Lines 172-211

After attracting so much attention of the good variety from the regular old monks, Lippo now attracts the wrong kind of attention from the Prior and the more bookish types. It turns out that they're not happy at all with what he's been doing.

The Prior (and here we get more dramatic monologue within a dramatic monologue) describes Lippo's superb real-life paintings as "devil's-game" (178). Yikes—that's not a phrase you really want heard in a monastery referring to your work.

These hoity-toity learned monks don't appreciate such realism that's like "pea and pea" (178). Instead, they would much prefer that Lippo's paintings make people forget they even have flesh.

The flesh is just the corrupted surface that is the temporary container for what's really important—the immortal soul. It's like that fruit and veggie peel thing again, only kicked up several notches.

Even though he wants Lippo to paint things that will lift men above the "perishable clay" (180), the Prior struggles with describing what the soul really is in lines 184-187. He can't even express himself clearly here, and tries several metaphors that fail. Plus, check out the ellipses and the hyphens, which suggest a difficulty in articulating this concept. In the end, he drops an exclamation point on us and basically says, "I can't tell you what it is. That's just what it is. And that's the end of it!" (187).

He really wants Lippo to paint no more of the body than is absolutely necessary for elevating the immortal soul. He cites Giotto, a late thirteenth-early-fourteenth-century Florentine painter, as a good example.

All those colors and lines and artistry that Lippo is daubing on his wall distracts the viewer from praising the divine soul, and this seems to really chap the Prior's hide. Lippo has apparently painted the Prior's niece ("that white smallish female with the breasts") to look like King Herod's sister-in-law, and mother of Salome, who got John the Baptist's head cut off. Hmm... are you getting the idea that maybe the Prior's "niece" isn't really his niece at all? Why would the Prior be noticing her breasts up in line 195?

In any case, the Prior demands that Lippo get rid of everything and start over, which really insults him. In a bitter tone, the artistic monk demands to know what sense there is in painting the body in a purposefully dumbed-down way. How would that get to the soul? Why can't he do both—paint the physical body in a realistic way that would then artistically showcase the soul?

Fra Lippo really seems to dwell quite a bit on the Prior's niece here. He apparently thinks she's a super-hottie, and uses her face as an example of how it's an idiotic proposition (in his humble opinion) to accept that the beauty of her face will mask the emotions behind it.

Lines 212-269

Can't he, Lippo argues, paint a woman's eyes and add "breath" and "life's flash" and also the "soul" (213-214), which will elevate the image to be three times as powerful? What would be wrong with that?

On the other hand (he rambles), what if he just paints pure beauty with no soul at all? He calls this "simple beauty" (217), and lets us in on his viewpoint that this is best thing that God has invented, because simple beauty in some way gets the viewer to see his or her own soul in that beauty. That sounds good to us.

He mocks the Prior by shouting, "Rub all out!" and seems to identify this as the main conflict of his life in the monastery.But wait—there's more. Lippo's also pretty ticked that, because of his vows, he misses out on a lot of action with the ladies. Check out that bitter tone when he says, "You should not take a fellow eight years old/ and make him swear to never kiss the girls" (224-225). And it's clear that Brother Lippo has been breaking those vows. That's what the whole "escape down the sheet ladder" teenage-like escapades are all about.

Now, though, Lippo has a different master—one who lives in the Corner House. This probably refers to Cosimo Medici, powerful and rich patron of Lippo.

But even though he gets more of a free hand with this patron, the monks are still standing over him being all judgy about his art.

Lippo gives us yet another dramatic monologue within the main one, which basically tells him: "Brothers Angelico and Lorenzo are way better than you. And if you keep on with painting realistically, you'll never be the third greatest." (Don't know who Angelico and Lorenzo are? Well, head on over to "Shout Outs" for the 4-1-1).

Better tuck in your Freudian slip, Lippo, 'cuz it's all hangin' out. He launches into yet another snatch of song lyrics, and slips up by almost mentioning "mistress." He quickly corrects himself to the more acceptable (for a monk) "manners" (239).

And isn't it also kind of suspicious that Lippo thinks of a mistress right after he pretends to be the Prior? This might shed a bit more light on who the "niece" is that Lippo brings up earlier. It's starting to sound like the Prior has broken some vows of his own.

Getting mad, Lippo sarcastically points out that these monks with their Latin are, of course, the best authorities, so they should know good art when they see it (not).

So, he just grits his teeth and buries his anger like a good little obedient monk, and gets on with it, painting what they want to see.

But "the business of the world" (247) continually intrudes, distracting him from painting the boring old saints that the Church types want him to paint.

And it's not just painting that's important to him, but living. He wants to experience life and not focus all of his attention on the afterlife. Browning expresses the lesser importance the Church puts on the material world by having Lippo call it a "dream." We get the impression that the idea of an afterlife is to Lippo more of a dream, and he'd much rather experience real life—warts and all.

So, to spite them, he sneaks out, revels, and gets his drink (and womanizing) on.

Lippo drops an extended metaphor on us in lines 254-257. He says that an old mill horse (a horse that powers a mill that grinds grain) will frolic around and enjoy himself eating grass, even though the miller isn't constantly preaching to him that grass is only good for making "chaff" (the dried out, dead hay that the grass becomes after it is cut and dried).

How do we apply this metaphor to Lippo's situation? Well, Lippo would be the horse and the Prior would be the miller and the grass would largely stand for worldly experience. The chaff represents the spiritual or religious life.

Lippo suggests through this metaphor that it's natural to be attached to worldly things. He just wants to know once and for all if this is okay. According to the churchy-y types at his monastery, it's not.

People are lying liars who lie: they really want what they claim to not like, while they don't want what they actually clamor for. Got that? It's kind of confusing, but that's totes appropriate for the type of drunken rambling Lippo is chatting up the guard with.

Plus, it so totally points to the hypocrisy of the Church. Remember the Prior's so-called niece?

The bottom line here is that Lippo's firmly attached to the world and its pleasures. After all, he knows the story about God and the Garden of Eden. God made woman for man, and the good monk just can't unlearn what he's been taught: "the value and significance of flesh" (268). We get the idea that old Lippo's talking about both in an artistic sense and a more lustful sense.

Section 2, Lines 270-280

Bro Lippo doesn't seem to have a very high opinion of himself, does he? He calls himself a "beast." But wait—this is a way for him to make a temporary alliance with the guard by pointing out that they have common ground.

There's a kid, Lippo tells the guard, now at the monastery who is also studying painting. His name is Guidi, a.k.a. "Hulking Tom." This kid must be pretty big, if he's hulk-like. Let's just hope he doesn't have an anger problem, or if he does that his robes are expandable. Anyway, this Guidi is quickly picking up Lippo's mad painting skills. And Lippo knows what's going to happen, the guardsman will eventually see.

This probably just means that Lippo expects Hulking Tom to get into the same hot water.

Lines 281-299

Lippo aligns himself even more with the guardsman by pointing out that neither of them speak Latin. That's important, because during the fifteenth century (when the real Lippo lived), Latin was the language of the super-educated and Church class. This downplays Lippo's status and puts him more on the same social level as the guard. It makes the guardsman Lippo's "man" (282).

And what's more, they both appreciate the world as it is, Lippo suggests. And since that's the way God made it, it's not evil (although this is more implied by the monk). Should everything—the beauty of the town, the river, the surrounding mountains and sky, as well as the people that inhabit it—just be ignored or hated?

Always the artist, Lippo gives us another helping of metaphor. The world is the "frame" (290) for the "figures" (289) of men, women, and children that dwell within it. His artist's eye zeroes right in on how he sees the world: everything is an object to be painted and considered in an artistic manner.

You're probably wondering at the enjambment that's going on in this passage. The bro's getting all worked up over his topic, so the poetic lines here reflect that spillover. (Check out "Form and Meter" for more on how this poem is put together.)

Now Lippo takes on a hypothetical voice that questions creating art at all. Since God's work is already present in the world, why paint it? It's already complete, right? And since you can't reproduce nature (here personified as a woman), an artist has to "beat" her and make his works cause the viewer to contemplate spiritual things.

Lines 300-335

Ultimately, it's wonder that makes people stop and gawk the most at art, Lippo argues. A good painter can paint something a person sees a hundred times a day, and make that object or scene better to that person. That's just what art does, yo.

"I mean," (Lippo seems to say), "haven't you seen your own rascally face?" (Or maybe Lippo's talking about one of the guardsmen's companions here). "Well, just give me a piece of chalk and you'll see it right enough!"

"Cullion" is a pretty interesting word here. If you look it up in the dictionary, you'll see that it's an archaic word for "rascal" or a "low fellow." It comes from an Old French word meaning "testicle." Yep—Lippo's gettin' just a wee bit crude here with his diction.

Back to the poetic action: if Lippo can paint an everyday scene and cause such wonder, then how much more fantabulous could he make "higher thing[s]" (309)? This more than likely refers to all those "saints and saints and saints" and similar subjects that he refers to back in lines 48-49.

Being able to do this would make Lippo too big for his britches. In that case, what need would there be for the Prior to preach? Lippo would have it all covered for the congregation in his paintings.

This prompts him to lament the fact that he'll be dead and won't be able to see all of the changes that art might wreak upon the world.The material world means something in itself, and this something is good. It's Lippo's job—nay, calling—to find this meaning through his paintings.But (and there's always a but, isn't there?), the meaning Lippo teases out isn't necessarily that which will cause viewers to pray or focus their minds on holy things. For instance, Tom the Baker won't come look at one of Lippo's paintings and naturally remember that he has a fast coming up the following week. This reinforces the argument Lippo has been recreating in his monologue between his idea of art, and the Church's idea of it.

We're back in bitter territory now. Lippo claims that you don't need art to get people to pray or go to Church. All you need for that is the image of the crucifix, which he here presents as a sort of low version of art. Check it: it's just "A skull and bones,/ Two bits of stick nailed crosswise" (320-321). We're sure that sentiment wouldn't make the Church happy, but we see Lippo's opinion on the Church's idea of "art."

Lippo gives us a nice anecdote to illustrate (see what we did there?) his point. He recently painted an image of St. Lawrence ("Shout Outs" is your friend here), which got precisely the type of reaction the Church was looking for. The people have defaced the fresco by scratching and rubbing out the images of the three slaves who turn St. Lawrence over the fire (eww). (BTW: "phiz" is an archaic term for "face.")

Eventually, the pious people will have completely erased the image, so Lippo will have another job to do in its place—mission accomplished.

Of course, Lippo just thinks the Prior (who is probably the voice he's dramatizing) and the lot of them are fools, because they just don't get it.

Section 3, Lines 336-343

Lippo seems to notice that maybe he's spoken too hastily about the higher-ups at the monastery, since he cautions the guardsman to not dwell too much on his "idle word[s]." After all, he is drunk (on a good Chianti... hopefully sans human liver and fava beans). He's not used to drinking much so his slip of the tongue should be forgiven. (Yeah, right—we believe you Lippo.)

He hopes the guard won't report his disobedient words to the Church, because it's really natural that Lippo would speak this way, since he's so out of his element.

He seems to be quite the smooth talker, our Lippo.

Now, he's going to tell the guardsman how he'll make things right with the Church.

Lines 344-392

Lippo's been thinking about this, and he's decided he's going to paint a piece.

For the guardsman? What's up with this "There's for you!" business? It sounds like Lippo is giving the guardsman something. Ah—this is probably a small sum of money offered as a bribe. Remember, a monk out from his monastery and skulking in the streets is a pretty obvious misdemeanor here, so Lippo's covering his tracks. If his smooth talking doesn't work, then his coin will.

He's going to paint something for the nuns at the basilica of Sant'Ambrogio. This piece, he tells us, will have God, the Virgin Mary, and the baby Jesus surrounded by a ton of angels. "Boewer, flower" is how Lippo describes them, and doesn't that just roll off the tongue? Well, it should, because it's an example of internal rhyme, which gives readers the flavor of poetry, but without end rhymes. This keeps the overall sound of the poem more conversational. (Check out "Form and Meter" for more on how the poem's constructed.)

He'll also throw in a few saints (in particular Saint John and Saint Ambrose, both of whom are important for Italy) and some illustrious Biblical figures, like Job of Uz. In lines 358-359, we get a bit of Lippo's monastic humor when he makes a joke about how painters need the patience of Job to do their jobs in the Church.

And whom shall he paint into the corner of the picture? Why, Lippo himself. He'll stick his own self-portrait down in the corner, "mazed, motionless, and moonstruck" (364). Browning gets his alliteration on here. (Check out "Sound Check" for more on the sounds at work in this poem.) He links amazement, stillness, and derangement with Lippo.

Lippo will be out of place in this painting, since he doesn't really belong among all of these higher-ups (literally, since they're in heaven).

Not so fast, though. Seriously—that's what one of the angels says to Lippo. As he tries to make his escape out of the painting (this is getting all very weird, isn't it?), he is stopped by a "sweet angelic slip of a thing" (370). Could this be more daydreaming about the ladies, eh, Lippo? This angelic figure speaks to the assembled luminaries and tells them that he (Lippo) is their creator. They (the holy figures, which stand in in general for higher spiritual contemplation) come to Lippo to be painted. He's their man. "Iste perfecit opus" means "This [man] caused the work to be done." Instead of just saying, "Dude did this," they have to go all Latin and make it sound fancy and impressive.

He imagines himself being flung into the crowd of angels and covered by their wings, which are like "a spread of kirtles when you're gay" (380). Translation? A "kirtle" is a loose gown worn by a woman. It would seem Lippo the Ladykiller has had quite a few romps upon discarded kirtles.

He also likens being in the midst of these angels to a game of "hot cockles," which is sort of like blindman's bluff. Oh, snap—here comes the husband. Seems Lippo can't get away from metaphors involving action with the ladies and possible consequences. Here, though, the "hotheaded husband" is a metaphor for the Church and its moral restrictions on his art.

He doesn't let go of the pretty angel's hand. She's kind of like the Prior's niece, or maybe even St. Lucy. It will all work out: he'll be spared by the guards, and the Church will get their painting.

Just check it out in six months if you don't believe me, Lippo tells the guardsman.

And Lippo rushes off into the night (dawn is about to break). He tells the guardsman he needs no light and can find his own way.

**TITHONUS**

The woods in the forests grow old and their leaves fall to the ground. Man is born, works the earth, and then dies and is buried underground. Yet the speaker, Tithonus, is cursed to live forever. Tithonus tells Aurora, goddess of the dawn, that he grows old slowly in her arms like a “white-hair’d shadow” roaming in the east.

Tithonus laments that while he is now a “gray shadow” he was once a beautiful man chosen as Aurora’s lover. He remembers that he long ago asked Aurora to grant him eternal life: “Give me immortality!” Aurora granted his wish generously, like a rich philanthropist who has so much money that he gives charity without thinking twice. However, the Hours, the goddesses who accompany Aurora, were angry that Tithonus was able to resist death, so they took their revenge by battering him until he grew old and withered. Now, though he cannot die, he remains forever old; and he must dwell in the presence of Aurora, who renews herself each morning and is thus forever young. Tithonus appeals to Aurora to take back the gift of immortality while the “silver star” of Venus rises in the morning. He now realizes the ruin in desiring to be different from all the rest of mankind and in living beyond the “goal of ordinance,” the normal human lifespan.

Just before the sun rises, Tithonus catches sight of the “dark world” where he was born a mortal. He witnesses the coming of Aurora, the dawn: her cheek begins to turn red and her eyes grow so bright that they overpower the light of the stars. Aurora’s team of horses awakes and converts the twilight into fire. The poet now addresses Aurora, telling her that she always grows beautiful and then leaves before she can answer his request. He questions why she must “scare” him with her tearful look of silent regret; her look makes him fear that an old saying might be true—that “The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.”

Tithonus sighs and remembers his youth long ago, when he would watch the arrival of the dawn and feel his whole body come alive as he lay down and enjoyed the kisses of another. This lover from his youth used to whisper to him “wild and sweet” melodies, like the music of Apollo’s lyre, which accompanied the construction of Ilion (Troy).

Tithonus asks Aurora not to keep him imprisoned in the east where she rises anew each morning, because his eternal old age contrasts so painfully with her eternal renewal. He cringes cold and wrinkled, whereas she rises each morning to warm “happy men that have the power to die” and men who are already dead in their burial mounds (“grassy barrows”). Tithonus asks Aurora to release him and let him die. This way, she can see his grave when she rises and he, buried in the earth, will be able to forget the emptiness of his present state, and her return “on silver wheels” that stings him each morning.

**Form**

This poem is a dramatic monologue: the entire text is spoken by a single character whose words reveal his identity. The lines take the form of blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter). The poem as a whole falls into seven paragraph-like sections of varying length, each of which forms a thematic unit unto itself.

**Commentary**

Like Ulysses, Tithonus is a figure from Greek mythology whom Tennyson takes as a speaker in one of his dramatic monologues (see the section on “Ulysses”). According to myth, Tithonus is the brother of Priam, King of Troy, and was loved by Aurora, the immortal goddess of the dawn, who had a habit of carrying off the beautiful young men whom she fancied. Aurora abducted Tithonus and asked Zeus to grant him immortality, which Zeus did. However, she forgot to ask that he also grant eternal youth, so Tithonus soon became a decrepit old man who could not die. Aurora finally transformed him into a grasshopper to relieve him of his sad existence. In this poem, Tennyson slightly alters the mythological story: here, it is Tithonus, not Aurora, who asks for immortality, and it is Aurora, not Zeus, who confers this gift upon him. The source of suffering in the poem is not Aurora’s forgetfulness in formulating her request to Zeus, but rather the goddesses referred to as “strong Hours” who resent Tithonus’s immortality and subject him to the ravages of time.

Tennyson wrote the first version of this poem as “Tithon” in 1833, and then completed the final version for publication in 1859 in the Cornhill Magazine edited by William Makepeace Thackeray. The 1833 version contained several significant differences from the version we know today: the poem began not with a repetition but with the lament “Ay me! ay me! The woods decay and fall”; the “swan,” which here dies after many summers was not a swan but a “rose”; and immortality was described as “fatal” rather than “cruel.”

The 1833 poem was initially conceived as a pendant, or companion poem, to “Ulysses.” “Ulysses” alludes to the danger that fulfillment may bring—”It may be that the gulfs will wash us down”; “Tithonus” represents the realization of this danger. For the character of Tithonus achieves that which Ulysses longs for and finds himself bitterly disappointed: Ulysses wanted to sail “beyond the sunset” because he sensed “how dull it is to pause”; Tithonus, in contrast, questions why any man should want “to pass beyond the goal of ordinance where all should pause” (lines 30-31). “Tithonus” thus serves as an appropriate thematic follow-up to “Ulysses.”

This poem was one of a set of four works (also including “Morte d’Arthur,” “Ulysses,” and “Tiresias”) that Tennyson wrote shortly after Arthur Henry Hallam’s death in 1833. Whereas Hallam was granted youth without immortality, Tithonus is granted immortality without youth. Tennyson developed the idea for a poem about these themes of age and mortality after hearing a remark by Emily Sellwood, Tennyson’s fiancée: Sellwood lamented that unlike the Hallams, “None of the Tennysons ever die.” Appropriately, in depicting the futility of eternal life without youth, Tennyson drew upon a timeless figure: the figure of Tithonus is eternally old because he lives on forever as an old man in the popular imagination.

**UNIT II**

**“THE SECOND COMING”**

The speaker describes a nightmarish scene: the falcon, turning in a widening “gyre” (spiral), cannot hear the falconer; “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold”; anarchy is loosed upon the world; “The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned.” The best people, the speaker says, lack all conviction, but the worst “are full of passionate intensity.”

Surely, the speaker asserts, the world is near a revelation; “Surely the Second Coming is at hand.” No sooner does he think of “the Second Coming,” then he is troubled by “a vast image of the *Spiritus Mundi,* or the collective spirit of mankind: somewhere in the desert, a giant sphinx (“A shape with lion body and the head of a man, / A gaze as blank and pitiless as the sun”) is moving, while the shadows of desert birds reel about it. The darkness drops again over the speaker’s sight, but he knows that the sphinx’s twenty centuries of “stony sleep” have been made a nightmare by the motions of “a rocking cradle.” And what “rough beast,” he wonders, “its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?”

**Form**

“The Second Coming” is written in a very rough iambic pentameter, but the meter is so loose, and the exceptions so frequent, that it actually seems closer to free verse with frequent heavy stresses. The rhymes are likewise haphazard; apart from the two couplets with which the poem opens, there are only coincidental rhymes in the poem, such as “man” and “sun.”

**Commentary**

Because of its stunning, violent imagery and terrifying ritualistic language, “The Second Coming” is one of Yeats’s most famous and most anthologized poems; it is also one of the most thematically obscure and difficult to understand. (It is safe to say that very few people who love this poem could paraphrase its meaning to satisfaction.) Structurally, the poem is quite simple—the first stanza describes the conditions present in the world (things falling apart, anarchy, etc.), and the second surmises from those conditions that a monstrous Second Coming is about to take place, not of the Jesus we first knew, but of a new messiah, a “rough beast,” the slouching sphinx rousing itself in the desert and lumbering toward Bethlehem. This brief exposition, though intriguingly blasphemous, is not terribly complicated; but the question of what it should signify to a reader is another story entirely.

Yeats spent years crafting an elaborate, mystical theory of the universe that he described in his book *A Vision.* This theory issued in part from Yeats’s lifelong fascination with the occult and mystical, and in part from the sense of responsibility Yeats felt to order his experience within a structured belief system. The system is extremely complicated and not of any lasting importance—except for the effect that it had on his poetry, which is of extraordinary lasting importance. The theory of history Yeats articulated in *A Vision* centers on a diagram made of two conical spirals, one inside the other, so that the widest part of one of the spirals rings around the narrowest part of the other spiral, and vice versa. Yeats believed that this image (he called the spirals “gyres”) captured the contrary motions inherent within the historical process, and he divided each gyre into specific regions that represented particular kinds of historical periods (and could also represent the psychological phases of an individual’s development).

“The Second Coming” was intended by Yeats to describe the current historical moment (the poem appeared in 1921) in terms of these gyres. Yeats believed that the world was on the threshold of an apocalyptic revelation, as history reached the end of the outer gyre (to speak roughly) and began moving along the inner gyre.

**THE PIED BEAUTY**

The poem opens with an offering: “Glory be to God for dappled things.” In the next five lines, Hopkins elaborates with examples of what things he means to include under this rubric of “dappled.” He includes the mottled white and blue colors of the sky, the “brinded” (brindled or streaked) hide of a cow, and the patches of contrasting color on a trout. The chestnuts offer a slightly more complex image: When they fall they open to reveal the meaty interior normally concealed by the hard shell; they are compared to the coals in a fire, black on the outside and glowing within. The wings of finches are multicolored, as is a patchwork of farmland in which sections look different according to whether they are planted and green, fallow, or freshly plowed. The final example is of the “trades” and activities of man, with their rich diversity of materials and equipment.

In the final five lines, Hopkins goes on to consider more closely the characteristics of these examples he has given, attaching moral qualities now to the concept of variety and diversity that he has elaborated thus far mostly in terms of physical characteristics. The poem becomes an apology for these unconventional or “strange” things, things that might not normally be valued or thought beautiful. They are all, he avers, creations of God, which, in their multiplicity, point always to the unity and permanence of His power and inspire us to “Praise Him.”

**Form**

This is one of Hopkins’s “curtal” (or curtailed) sonnets, in which he miniaturizes the traditional sonnet form by reducing the eight lines of the octave to six (here two tercets rhyming *ABC ABC*) and shortening the six lines of the sestet to four and a half. This alteration of the sonnet form is quite fitting for a poem advocating originality and contrariness. The strikingly musical repetition of sounds throughout the poem (“dappled,” “stipple,” “tackle,” “fickle,” “freckled,” “adazzle,” for example) enacts the creative act the poem glorifies: the weaving together of diverse things into a pleasing and coherent whole.

**Commentary**

This poem is a miniature or set-piece, and a kind of ritual observance. It begins and ends with variations on the mottoes of the Jesuit order (“to the greater glory of God” and “praise to God always”), which give it a traditional flavor, tempering the unorthodoxy of its appreciations. The parallelism of the beginning and end correspond to a larger symmetry within the poem: the first part (the shortened octave) begins with God and then moves to praise his creations. The last four-and-a-half lines reverse this movement, beginning with the characteristics of things in the world and then tracing them back to a final affirmation of God. The delay of the verb in this extended sentence makes this return all the more satisfying when it comes; the long and list-like predicate, which captures the multiplicity of the created world, at last yields in the penultimate line to a striking verb of creation (fathers-forth) and then leads us to acknowledge an absolute subject, God the Creator. The poem is thus a hymn of creation, praising God by praising the created world. It expresses the theological position that the great variety in the natural world is a testimony to the perfect unity of God and the infinitude of His creative power. In the context of a Victorian age that valued uniformity, efficiency, and standardization, this theological notion takes on a tone of protest.

Why does Hopkins choose to commend “dappled things” in particular? The first stanza would lead the reader to believe that their significance is an aesthetic one: In showing how contrasts and juxtapositions increase the richness of our surroundings, Hopkins describes variations in color and texture—of the sensory. The mention of the “fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls” in the fourth line, however, introduces a moral tenor to the list. Though the description is still physical, the idea of a nugget of goodness imprisoned within a hard exterior invites a consideration of essential *value* in a way that the speckles on a cow, for example, do not. The image transcends the physical, implying how the physical links to the spiritual and meditating on the relationship between body and soul. Lines five and six then serve to connect these musings to human life and activity.

Hopkins first introduces a landscape whose characteristics derive from man’s alteration (the fields), and then includes “trades,” “gear,” “tackle,” and “trim” as diverse items that are man-made. But he then goes on to include these things, along with the preceding list, as part of God’s work.

Hopkins does not refer explicitly to human beings themselves, or to the variations that exist among them, in his catalogue of the dappled and diverse. But the next section opens with a list of qualities (“counter, original, spare, strange”) which, though they doggedly refer to “things” rather than people, cannot but be considered in moral terms as well; Hopkins’s own life, and particularly his poetry, had at the time been described in those very terms. With “fickle” and “freckled” in the eighth line, Hopkins introduces a moral and an aesthetic quality, each of which would conventionally convey a negative judgment, in order to fold even the base and the ugly back into his worshipful inventory of God’s gloriously “pied” creation.

**WHAT THE THUNDER SAID- THE WASTE LAND**

In summary: things really begin to break down properly here. In the previous four sections of The Waste Land, Eliot had used a number of different poetic forms and metres, and although the poetry occasionally broke down into what we might call free verse, it usually regained its form after a while. But ‘What the Thunder Said’ is overwhelming written in unpunctuated, unrhymed, irregular free verse. It is as if the lack of water has led the speaker of ‘What the Thunder Said’, in his desire for water, to lapse into semi-coherent snatches of speech.

There is a [good biographical reason](https://interestingliterature.com/2015/01/08/a-very-short-biography-of-t-s-eliot/) for all this. When T. S. Eliot wrote this section, the last part of The Waste Land that he wrote, he was convalescing in Lausanne, and claims to have written ‘What the Thunder Said’ very quickly, in a sort of trance. He even claimed – though perhaps with his tongue partially in his cheek – that he wasn’t even bothering to check that what he wrote was even making any sense.

Much of this final section of the poem is about a desire for water: the waste land is a land of drought where little will grow. Water is needed to restore life to the earth, to return a sterile land to fertility. (Shades of the Fisher King myth here again.) Along the way, in ll. 359-65, we get a weird digression which sees the speaker asking about a hallucinated third person (s)he imagines walking alongside his (her) travelling companion, a detail that was inspired, Eliot tells us in his notes, by one of Ernest Shackleton’s Antarctic expeditions, where one of the men suffered from the delusion that there was one more man among their number, an imagined extra person. Shades of the Gothic are introduced here, which are echoed by the bats with the baby faces in the chapel. We are also in the realms of Arthurian myth here, and the Grail quest: the Chapel Perilous was the place, in Sir Thomas Malory’s Le Morte d’Arthur, where Lancelot was tempted – as with ‘The Fire Sermon’, temptation re-emerges as a theme. Can one remain spiritually pure and focused, or will the lure of the body become too strong?

Then, finally, rain comes to the land, and there is a thunderclap. The sound of the thunder – DA – is analysed and interpreted in different ways by those who hear it. It is variously interpreted as datta(‘give’), dayadhvam(‘sympathise’), and damyata(‘control’), taken from the [Upanishads](http://www.ancient.eu/Upanishads/), a series of sacred texts important to both Hinduism and Buddhism. Each of these three commands is meditated on in the lines that succeed it – so, for instance, after ‘DATTA’ we find the question ‘What have we given?’ followed by reference to ‘a moment’s surrender’ – a giving (or giving up) of oneself.

‘What the Thunder Said’ concludes with a collage of quotations from various sources: the nursery rhyme ‘London Bridge is falling down’ (suggesting the demise of London as the centre of a vast empire and trading power); Dante’s Purgatorio(‘Then dives him into the fire which refines him’); the Pervigilium Veneris, a Latin poem dating back nearly two thousand years, followed by a Tennyson poem (‘O swallow swallow’); a sonnet by Gerard de Nerval (‘the Prince of Aquitaine in the ruined tower’); [Thomas Kyd’s Elizabethan play**The Spanish Tragedy**](https://interestingliterature.com/2017/04/25/a-short-analysis-of-thomas-kyds-the-spanish-tragedy/)(c. 1587); and finally, the word ‘Shantih’, which Eliot says is roughly equivalent to our phrase ‘the peace which passeth understanding’, repeated three times.

What should we make of this assemblage of literary snippets from various periods of history, and from both high and low culture (French poetry, [children’s nursery rhymes](https://interestingliterature.com/2017/10/18/the-best-nursery-rhymes-everyone-should-know/))? One way of analysing ‘What the Thunder Said’, or the closing lines at any rate, is to posit that the speaker has finally gone completely mad: ‘Hieronymo’s mad againe’, Eliot says, quoting Thomas Kyd. For a more detailed analysis of the closing lines of Eliot’s poem.

**THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES**

Thetis looks at the images on the shield that Hephaestos has been making for Achilles during the Trojan War. She expected to see olive trees and vines and marble cities and ships on windy seas, but Hephaestos has forged “an artificial wilderness” under a leaden sky. The plain is bare and brown, but a great multitude of boots stand ready for war. A faceless voice dryly explains with statistics why war is required for justice, so they march forth.

Thetis also expected scenes of religious piety, but that is not what Hephaestos has been making. Barbed wire encloses a military camp in “an arbitrary spot,” and civilians observe from a distance while the camp punishes three pale prisoners by binding them to upright posts. No hope comes from outside. The prisoners and the citizens are too “small,” and the prisoners (perhaps also the other characters) “lost their pride / And died as men before their bodies died.”

Thetis has looked a third time over the shoulder of Hephaestos while he works. She looks for athletes and dancers enjoying games and music, but on the shield there was a “weed-choked field” instead of a dancing floor. One poor child wanders about alone, throwing a stone at a bird that flies away to escape. To him rape and murder seem normal. The child has never heard of a place with kept promises or even human sympathy.

Hephaestos limps away, revealing the whole shield to Thetis, who cries out in horror at its imagery. This is what the armorer decided to put on the shield of Achilles, son of Thetis, Achilles the man-slayer doomed to soon die.

**Analysis**

“The Shield of Achilles” provides a chilling confrontation between love and war. Written in 1952, it was included in his volume of poetry of the same name, which was published in 1955. The volume won the National Book Award in 1956. It is written in alternating seven-line stanzas of rime royal (ABABBCC) and eight-line stanzas in a ballad format (ABCBDEFE).

The contents of the poem derive from Homer’s Iliad, an ancient epic poem concerning a key part of the Trojan War. A lot has happened by this point. In book 18, the goddess Thetis, the mother of Achilles, asks the god Hephaestos (Latinized as Hephaestus) to create a shield for son so he can triumph in the war against Troy. Achilles’s earlier shield was taken by Hector after he killed Achilles’ close friend Patroclus, who had taken the armor into battle thinking that seeing this armor would scare the Trojans (Achilles had stayed out of the fight over a dispute with Agamemnon about a woman). Homer goes into great detail describing the shield that Hephaestos makes; it contains a veritable history of the world in its scenes of pastoral calm, marriage, war, the cosmos, art, and nature.

The poem begins Thetis looking over the armorer’s shoulder with disappointment. In each of her three stanzas, employing the repetition “She looked over his shoulder” in the first line, she is hoping to see images of civilization, joy, piety, and peaceful employment of athletic and musical arts. She loves her son and is thinking ahead to what he should be fighting for. But instead she sees images of irrationality, war, wilderness, immorality, injustice, and punishment. The contrast between what Thetis expects and what Hephaestos delivers, what Thetis desires and what the armorer thinks appropriate for Achilles, is stark.

The pattern of hope and disappointment occurs all three times, followed by the concluding stanza wrapping up the point: after all, Achilles is doomed to live a short but heroic warrior’s life. Achilles, like people in general, can try to live average but boring lives instead, but Achilles has chosen heroism, and his mother is dismayed.

**THE STRANGE MEETING**

**Summary**

The speaker escapes from battle and proceeds down a long tunnel through ancient granite formations. Along his way he hears the groan of sleepers, either dead or too full of thoughts to get up. As he looks at them one leaps up; the soldier has recognized him and moves his hands as if to bless him. Because of the soldier's "dead smile" the speaker knows that he is in Hell.

On the face of the "vision" the speaker sees a thousand fears, but the blood, guns, or moans of above did not reach into their subterranean retreat. The speaker tells the soldier that there is no reason to mourn, and he replies that there is – it is the "undone years" and "hopelessness". The soldier says his hope is the same as the speaker's; he also tells him he once went hunting for beauty in the world, but that beauty made a mockery of time. He knows the truth of what he did, which is "the pity of war, the pity war distilled", but now he can never share it.

The soldier/vision continues, saying men will go on with what is left to them, or they will die as well. They will not break their ranks even though "nations trek from progress". He used to have courage and wisdom. He would wash the blood from the wheels of chariots. He wanted to pour his spirit out, but not in war.

Finally, he says to the speaker that "I am the enemy you killed, my friend," and that he knew him in the dark. It was yesterday that the speaker "jabbed and killed" him, and now it is time to sleep.

**Analysis**

"Strange Meeting" is one of [Wilfred Owen](https://www.gradesaver.com/author/wilfred-owen)'s most famous, and most enigmatic, poems. It was published posthumously in 1919 in Edith Sitwell's anthology Wheels: an Anthology of Verse and a year later in Siegfried Sassoon's 1920 collection of Owen's poems. T.S. Eliot referred to "Strange Meeting" as a "technical achievement of great originality" and "one of the most moving pieces of verse inspired by the war." That war, of course, is WWI – the central element in all poems in Owen's relatively small oeuvre. The poet Ted Hughes noted in his writings on "Strange Meeting": "few poets can ever have written with such urgent, defined, practical purpose."

The poem is renowned for its technical innovation, particularly the pararhyme, so named by Edmund Bluson in regard to Owen's use of assonant endings. A pararhyme is a slant or partial rhyme in which the words have similar consonants before and after unlike vowels – escaped and scooped, groaned and grained, hair and hour. Almost all of the end lines in this poem are pararhyme; the last line is a notable exception. Critics have noted how this rhyme scheme adds to the melancholy, subterranean, and bleak atmosphere of the poem.

The poem's description of a soldier's descent into Hell where he meets an enemy soldier he killed lends itself to a critique of war. The dead man talks about the horror of war and the inability for anyone but those involved to grasp the essential truth of the experience. There is more than meets the eye, however, and many critics believe that the man in hell is the soldier's "Other", or his double. A man's encounter with his double is a common trope in Romantic literature; the device was used by Shelley, Dickens, and Yeats, among others. The critic Dominic Hibbard notes the poem does not "[present] war as a merely internal, psychological conflict – but neither is it concerned with the immediate divisions suggested by 'German' and 'conscript' [initially what the dead man calls himself] or 'British' and 'volunteer'." The dead man is the Other, but he is more than a reflection of the speaker - he is a soldier whose death renders his status as an enemy void. Another critic reads the poem as a dream vision, with the soldier descending into his mind and encountering his poetic self, the poem becoming a mythological and psychological journey. Finally, Elliot B. Gose, Jr. writes that "the Other...represents the narrator's unconscious, his primal self from which he has been alienated by war."

**UNIT - III**

**HERO AS A MAN OF LETTERS**

Nature does not make all great men, more than all other men, in the self-same mould.

OPENING:I am A Man of Letters. I’ve been reading lately, and I have found some words I would like to share. Today, selections from “The Hero Lectures” by Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle was born in 1795 and died in 1881. He was an author and a teacher. “The Hero Lectures” were presented for the first time in May 1840.

BODY: A Great Man especially, of him I will venture to assert that it is incredible he should have been other than true. It seems to me the primary foundation of him, and of all that can lie in him, this. No Mirabeau, Napoleon, Burns, Cromwell, no man adequate to do anything, but is first of all in right earnest about it; what I call a sincere man. I should say sincerity, a deep, great, genuine sincerity, is the first characteristic of all men in any way heroic. Not the sincerity that calls itself sincere; ah no, that is a very poor matter indeed; a shallow braggart conscious sincerity; oftenest self-conceit mainly. The Great Man’s sincerity is of the kind he cannot speak of, is not conscious of: nay, I suppose, he is conscious rather of insincerity; for what man can walk accurately by the law of truth for one day? No, the Great Man does not boast himself sincere, far from that; perhaps does not ask himself if he is so: I would say rather, his sincerity does not depend on himself; he cannot help being sincere! The great Fact of Existence is great to him. Fly as he will, he cannot get out of the awful presence of this Reality. His mind is so made; he is great by that, first of all. Fearful and wonderful, real as Life, real as Death, is this Universe to him. Though all men should forget its truth, and walk in a vain show, he cannot. At all moments the Flame-image glares in upon him; undeniable, there, there! I wish you to take this as my primary definition of a Great Man. A little man may have this, it is competent to all men that God has made: but a Great Man cannot be without it.

Such a man is what we call an original man; he comes to us at first-hand. A messenger he, sent from the Infinite Unknown with tidings to us. We may call him Poet, Prophet, God; in one way or other, we all feel that the words he utters are as no other man’s words. Direct from the Inner Fact of things; he lives, and has to live, in daily communion with that. Hearsays cannot hide it from him; he is blind, homeless, miserable, following hearsays; it glares in upon him. Really his utterances, are they not a kind of “revelation;” what we must call such for want of some other name? It is from the heart of the world that he comes; he is portion of the primal reality of things. God has made many revelations: but this man too, has not God made him, the latest and newest of all? The “inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding:” we must listen before all to him. […]

The Hero as Divinity, the Hero as Prophet, are productions of old ages; not to be repeated in the new. They presuppose a certain rudeness of conception, which the progress of mere scientific knowledge puts an end to. There needs to be, as it were, a world vacant, or almost vacant of scientific forms, if men in their loving wonder are to fancy their fellow-man either a god or one speaking with the voice of a god. Divinity and Prophet are past. We are now to see our Hero in the less ambitious, but also less questionable, character of Poet; a character which does not pass. The Poet is a heroic figure belonging to all ages; whom all ages possess, when once he is produced, whom the newest age as the oldest may produce; and will produce, always when Nature pleases. Let Nature send a Hero-soul; in no age is it other than possible that he may be shaped into a Poet.

Hero, Prophet, Poet – many different names, in different times, and places, do we give to Great Men; according to varieties we note in them, according to the sphere in which they have displayed themselves! We might give many more names, on this same principle. I will remark again, however, as a fact not unimportant to be understood, that the different sphere constitutes the grand origin of such distinction; that the Hero can be Poet, Prophet, King, Priest or what you will, according to the kind of world he finds himself born into. I confess, I have no notion of a truly great man that could not be all sorts of men. The Poet who could merely sit on a chair, and compose stanzas, would never make a stanza worth much. He could not sing the Heroic warrior, unless he himself were at least a Heroic warrior too. I fancy there is in him the Politician, the Thinker, Legislator, Philosopher; in one or the other degree, he could have been, he is all these. So too I cannot understand how a Mirabeau, with that great glowing heart, with the fire that was in it, with the bursting tears that were in it, could not have written verses, tragedies, poems, and touched all hearts in that way, had his course of life and education led him thitherward. The grand fundamental character is that of Great Man; that the man be great. […]

Nature does not make all great men, more than all other men, in the self-same mould. Varieties of aptitude doubtless; but infinitely more of circumstance; and far oftenest it is the latter only that are looked to. But it is as with common men in the learning of trades. You take any man, as yet a vague capability of a man, who could be any kind of craftsman; and make him into a smith, a carpenter, a mason: he is then and thenceforth that and nothing else. And if, as Addison complains, you sometimes see a street-porter, staggering under his load on spindle-shanks, and near at hand a tailor with the frame of a Samson handling a bit of cloth and small Whitechapel needle – it cannot be considered that aptitude of Nature alone has been consulted here either! The Great Man also, to what shall he be bound apprentice? Given your Hero, is he to become Conqueror, King, Philosopher, Poet? It is an inexplicably complex controversial calculation between the world and him! He will read the world and its laws; the world with its laws will be there to be read. What the world, on this matter, shall permit and bid is, as we said, the most important fact about the world.

Poet and Prophet differ greatly in our loose modern notions of them. In some old languages, again, the titles are synonymous; Vates means both Prophet and Poet: and indeed at all times, Prophet and Poet, well understood, have much kindred of meaning. Fundamentally indeed they are still the same; in this most important respect especially, that they have penetrated both of them into the sacred mystery of the Universe; what Goethe calls “the open secret.” “Which is the great secret?” asks one. “The open secret,” open to all, seen by almost none!

That divine mystery, which lies everywhere in all Beings, “the Divine Idea of the World, that which lies at the bottom of Appearance,” as Fichte styles it; of which all Appearance, from the starry sky to the grass of the field, but especially the Appearance of Man and his work, is but the vesture, the embodiment that renders it visible. This divine mystery is in all times and in all places; veritably is. In most times and places it is greatly overlooked; and the Universe, definable always in one or the other dialect, as the realized Thought of God, is considered a trivial, inert, commonplace matter, as if, says the Satirist, it were a dead thing, which some upholsterer had put together! It could do no good, at present, to speak much about this; but it is a pity for every one of us if we do not know it, live ever in the knowledge of it. Really a most mournful pity; a failure to live at all, if we live otherwise!

But now, I say, whoever may forget this divine mystery, the Vates, whether Prophet or Poet, has penetrated into it; is a man sent hither to make it more impressively known to us. That always is his message; he is to reveal that to us, that sacred mystery which he more than others lives ever present with. While others forget it, he knows it; I might say, he has been driven to know it; without consent asked of him, he finds himself living in it, bound to live in it. Once more, here is no Hearsay, but a direct Insight and Belief; this man too could not help being a sincere man! Whosoever may live in the shows of things, it is for him a necessity of nature to live in the very fact of things. A man once more, in earnest with the Universe, though all others were but toying with it. He is a Vates, first of all, in virtue of being sincere. So far Poet and Prophet, participators in the “open secret,” are one. […]

**OF QUEENS GARDENS**

John Ruskin's essay 'Of Queen’s Gardens' was originally given as a public lecture before being published in his two-essay collection Sesame and Lilies (1865). It is regarded as epitomising the conservative Victorian ideal of feminity which defined women as passive and belonging to the private sphere of the domestic home – in comparison to the man who was 'the doer, the creator, the discoverer' of the public sphere.

Woman in the 1800s was seen as a wife, mother and care taker of the house. It can be seen that a woman was and still have rule over the house. They are seen as being more domestic out of anything. Their true domain is there house. In England around the 1800s women believed that the house couldn’t be there domain anymore. They wanted to go out into the workforce like their husband or any other man. They felt as if their work was child play or even not important. In Ruskin work “ Of Queens’ Gardens” it is seen that he is trying to let women know that the job that they do is not child play, but is very important to not only men and children, it is important to everyone in the world.

Ruskin lays down the ground work of his essay by explaining the role of men first. Men are seen to be the driving force of the house. They are to battle and conquer when needed. They need to stay strong and never show weakness. They are also supposed to protect the ones they love from danger no matter what the cost is. They are supposed to protect the ones they love from danger no matter what the person they are protecting say or even when they try to run into the threat that is coming their way.

After laying down the ground work of what the man role is, he goes on to explaining the women role in the world. The women role is to rule. They just do not rule for battle. He explain that in the first paragraph of lines six through seven. Ruskin concluded that women power is for “sweet ordering, arrangement and decision” (Norton 1615). That women are even consider to be gentle and sweet no matter what.

Ruskin ask a question that makes the readers wonder a little bit. That question is: what are the struggles within the role of men? It is a question like...... middle of paper ......ps the wheels in the readers head turning to the point they start to think that yes women do have more power than men has. That even men just goes out to work, while the women stays home with all of the world on their shoulders. When he appeals to our logic is how he establish his credibility. When I say that is that he wants us to think and breaking down the ranking of men and women while also stating the point of how powerful women really are.

Women shouldn’t have to go into the workforce because they have a workforce at home for them. That even if she leave the home, home is still with her. Ruskin over-all proves all of that within his writing. No one else would be able to explain how important the role of women like he did without critizing them. Ruskin lifted women up and made them feel so prideful within their line of work. That work being there role at home.

According to John Ruskin (1819 - 1900), the place of women in society is much more dignified than even that of men. Ruskin hates the idea of treating women as mere shadow and attendant image of their lord.i.e. men. Really there is no difference between man and women. According to him, a woman is a dignified creature. He corroborates his opinion with the testimony of the great authors regarding the true dignity of women.

In his lecture Of Queens’ Gardens he first takes Shakespeare, “Shakespeare has no heroes; he has only heroine”. Ruskin says, there is no one entirely heroic figure in all his plays, except the slight sketch of Henry the 5th. In his laboured and perfect plays, there is virtually no hero. All the heroes of these plays are glomourless before the shining characters of the heroines. But Othello is the only example approximation to the heroic type. On the other hand, there is hardly a play that has not a perfect woman in it.

Farther Ruskin argues that the catastrophe of every play is caused always by the folly or fault of a man. The redemption, if there be any, is by the wisdom and virtue of a woman, and failing that, there is none. In Shakespeare’s play women like Desdemona, Isabella, Hermione, queen Catharine, Sylvia, Viola, Rosalind , Helena and last, perhaps the loveliest, Virgilia are faultless, effortless and conceived in the highest heroic type of humanity.

However, it may be noticed that in Shakespeare’s plays there is only one weak woman: Ophelia; and it is because she fails hamlet to study at a critical moment. Finally though there are three wicked women among the principal figures: Lady Macbeth, Regan and Goneril. They are felt at once to be frightful exceptions to the ordinary laws of life; fatal in their influence also, in proportion to the power for good which they have abandoned.

Hence, Ruskin testifies the superiority of women over men. So far their virtues are concerned, represents them as infallibly faithful and wise counselor, incorruptibly just and pure examples. Ruskin also draws from other poets to justify his views. Chaucer has depicted the marvelous character of a good woman in the poem, The Legend of Good Woman. Similarly, Spenser draws the character of his women figures in noble and dignified terms. Even in ancient literature, the best virtues are seen to have personified as women. In Egypt, people gave to wisdom the form of a woman.

Thus, Lilies is a sermon for women. The Queens’ Gardens represents Ruskin’s view of the true function and sphere of women. His aim is to demonstrate from the teachings of the world’s sage minds that such function is a guiding and not determining one, and that the domain of women is within her ambit of argument where she is the centre of order, the balm of distress, and the mirror of beauty. Women’s power is for rule , not for battle; and her intellect is not for invention but for sweet order, arrangement and decision. And whenever the true wife comes, the home is always round her. The stars only may be over the head , the glowworm in the night-cold grass may be the only fire at her foot; but home is yet wherever she is ; and for a noble woman it stretches fair round her; better than sealed with cedar, with or painted with vermilion.