

Working With Poems and Poetic Metaphor

Tuesday 12-14
Wilhelmstr. 26

Class nine, 18 December 2007: in-class two hour midterm exam

Please plan to use at least half of your time to analyze one of the two poems listed in Part 2. Please use about half of your time to answer the questions in Part 1. Please write your answers as legibly as possible on lined paper. Kindly give me all of your scrap paper when you turn in the exam.

Part 1

- 1) Describe two definitions of metaphors. In your opinion which of these is more helpful for describing and understanding poetic metaphor?**
- 2) What is a “blend”?**
- 3) What qualities, if any, are particular to poetic metaphor versus other kinds of metaphor?**
- 4) Name at least four qualities of Romantic poetry. How did this type of poetry differ from what went before it?**
- 5) In your opinion what was the significance of the Tyrian trader in Arnold’s “The Scholar Gypsy”? How did this simile contribute to the totality of the poem?**
- 6) What are the most important features of Victorian poetry?**

Part 2

Please analyse one of the following two poems. If you took the survey course with Professor Fludernik and have already studied “Dover Beach” please analyze the Rossetti poem. Pay attention to both formal features and the content of the poem. Please describe the poem’s central metaphor or metaphors. If you wish, you can also relate your analysis of the poem to the socio-historical context in which it was written.

Dover Beach

The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery;¹ we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles² of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

—Mathew Arnold, (*New Poems*, 1867)

¹ Cf. Sophocles' *Antigone* (441 BC) lines 583-91. There the chorus sings about the misfortune of Antigone's and Ismene's having been condemned to death.

² Beaches covered with water-worn small stones and pebbles.

An Apple-Gathering

**I plucked pink blossoms from mine apple tree
And wore them all that evening in my hair:
Then in due season when I went to see
I found no apples there.
With dangling basket all along the grass
As I had come I went the selfsame track:
My neighbours mocked me while they saw me pass
So empty-handed back.**

**Lilian and Liliast smiled in trudging by,
Their heaped-up basket teased me like a jeer;
Sweet-voiced they sang beneath the sunset sky,
Their mother's home was near.**

**Plump Gertrude passed me with her basket full,
A stronger hand than hers helped it along;
A voice talked with her thro' the shadows cool
More sweet to me than song.**

**Ah Willie, Willie, was my love less worth
Than apples with their green leaves piled above?
I counted rosiest apples on the earth
Of far less worth than love.**

**So once it was with me you stooped to talk
Laughing and listening in this very lane:
To think that by this way we used to walk
We shall not walk again!**

**I let my neighbours pass me, ones and twos
And groups; the latest said the night grew chill,
And hastened: but I loitered, while the dews
Fell fast I loitered still.**

**—Christina Georgina Rossetti (*Goblin Market and Other Poems*,
1862)**

During the Christmas break kindly prepare “Ode to the West Wind,” “The Road Not Taken,” and “Hard Rock Returns to Prison from the Hospital for the Criminal Insane.” We will discuss these poems and “The Skylark” and “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer” on January 8. Happy Holidays!