

**Lecture 2:**  
**What Is Literature: The Term?**

# Literature

Sumerian Origins

Schools of Scribes

Numbering Tablets

Aramaic and Greek

Poetry

Music

Myths

The Gilgamesh Epic

The Babylonian Flood Myth

Biblical Flood

Prayers and Hymns

Wisdom Literature

Prophecy

Cuneiform



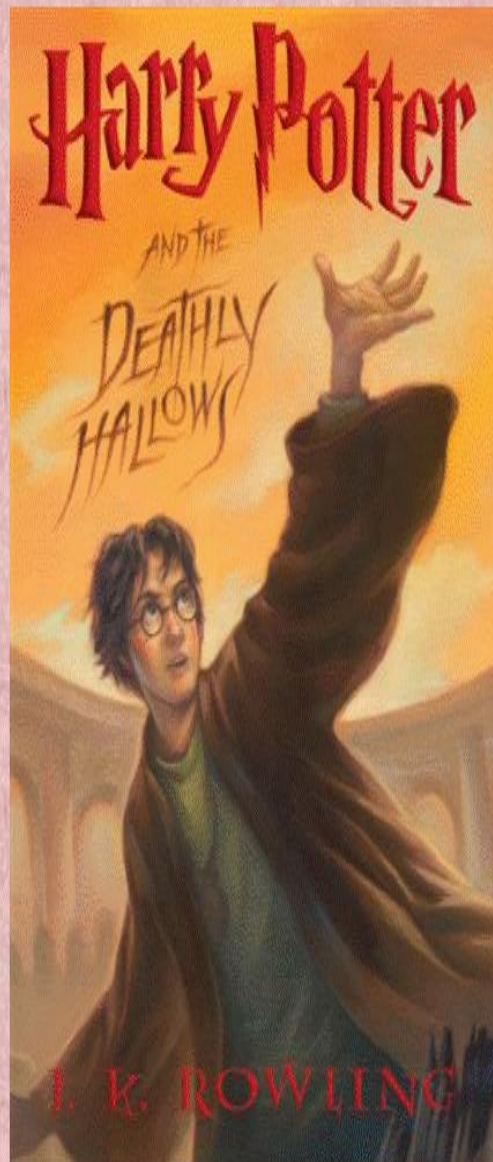
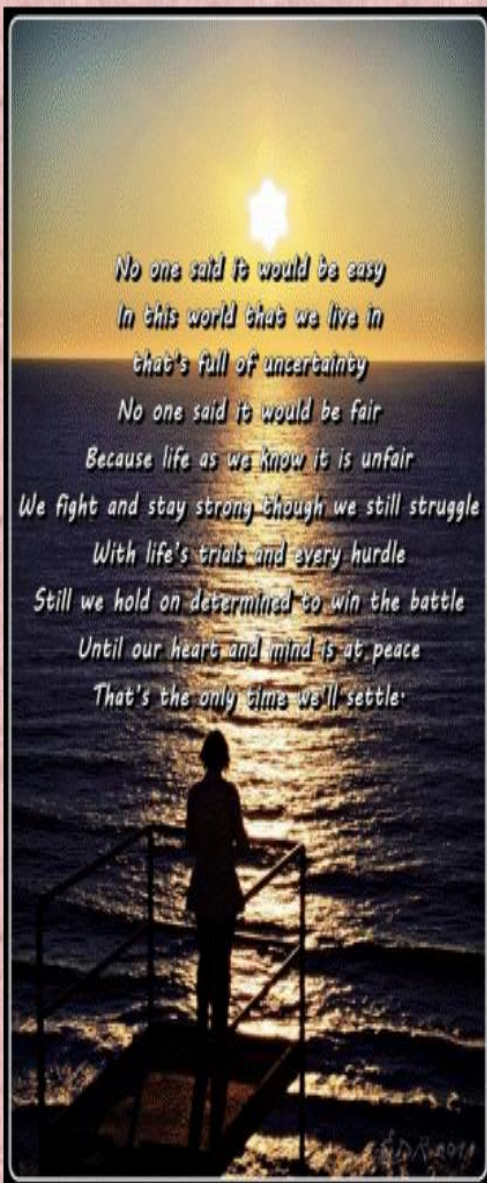
Literature as a concept.

Oral or written heritage expressing  
man's emotions and ideas. It is also a  
reservoir of man's inner features  
across different cultures, and  
historical periods.





The most classical definitions of literature concentrate on both its language and narrative structures.





# Language and Form or Structure?

## What is the Language of Literature?

- The specific ways in which literature is transmitted; either orally or by means of the written words, mostly termed as style, or voice.
- Usually seen to involve certain amount of skill, or sometimes even, talent.

## What is the structure of literature?

- The ways in which it is built. For instance, some literature is built around a story, while another literature is built purely around ideas and concepts.
- The first kind we generally call narrative, while the second, we call non-narrative.



**“What is literature”:** is Perhaps the most difficult of all philosophic questions ever asked ; why?

1. The individuality of taste?
2. The temporality of Judgment.
3. The flexibility of socio-cultural value-systems.
4. The impossibility of determining intent.
5. The indetermineability of reference.

## Why is literature important?

1. Self-knowledge and therefore self-development.
2. Illumination of various areas in the socio-cultural landscape which in turn increases chances of change and, therefore, advancement in terms of both ideals or value systems, and practices in everyday life.



3. Widens horizons of imagination and, therefore, capacity for innovation.
4. Offers means with which to enlarge view points regarding others.

4. Preserves and in a sense also investigates its societies' cultural and aesthetic ideals for future generations to build upon and improve for the benefit of all humanity.
5. Literature is the cultural and aesthetic memory for all humanity; the memory—hard-drive; the storage facility, preserving the details of the human struggle for ethical and ontological perfection.



**Lecture 3:**  
**What is Literature; The Genre?**

Conventional Types of Literature  
The Stylistic Definition of “Genre”

Prose

Poetry



Genre is the conventional way to understand some of what literature is on the level of language.

The most common definition of “genre” refers to some distinctive formal and stylistic features distinguishing the majority of literary manifestations, be them oral or written, in a specific language, era or society.



# What is poetry and what is prose?

## What is the most generic description of Poetry?

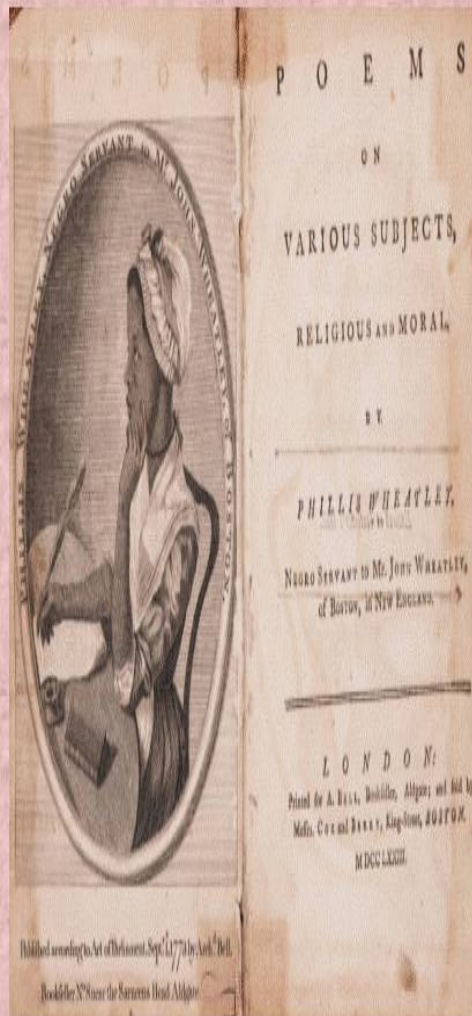
- This type of literature which is seen to depend on rhythm, or word-music, or, as properly termed; “Prosody”.
- It is generally known to offer certain concentration of emotions, density of ideas and concepts, and depth of metaphor and imagery.
- It is generically subdivided into many forms such as elegy, Epic, Ballad, Sonnet, Ode, depending on certain common features.

## What is the most generic definition of Prose?

- This type of literature which is seen not to depend on prosody.
- It is classically seen to be divided into narrative and non-narrative forms of writing.
- The Narrative forms are generically subdivided into drama, novel and short story.



How poetic is prose;  
and  
How prose-like is poetry?



Are there any limitations  
to generic definitions of  
literature?

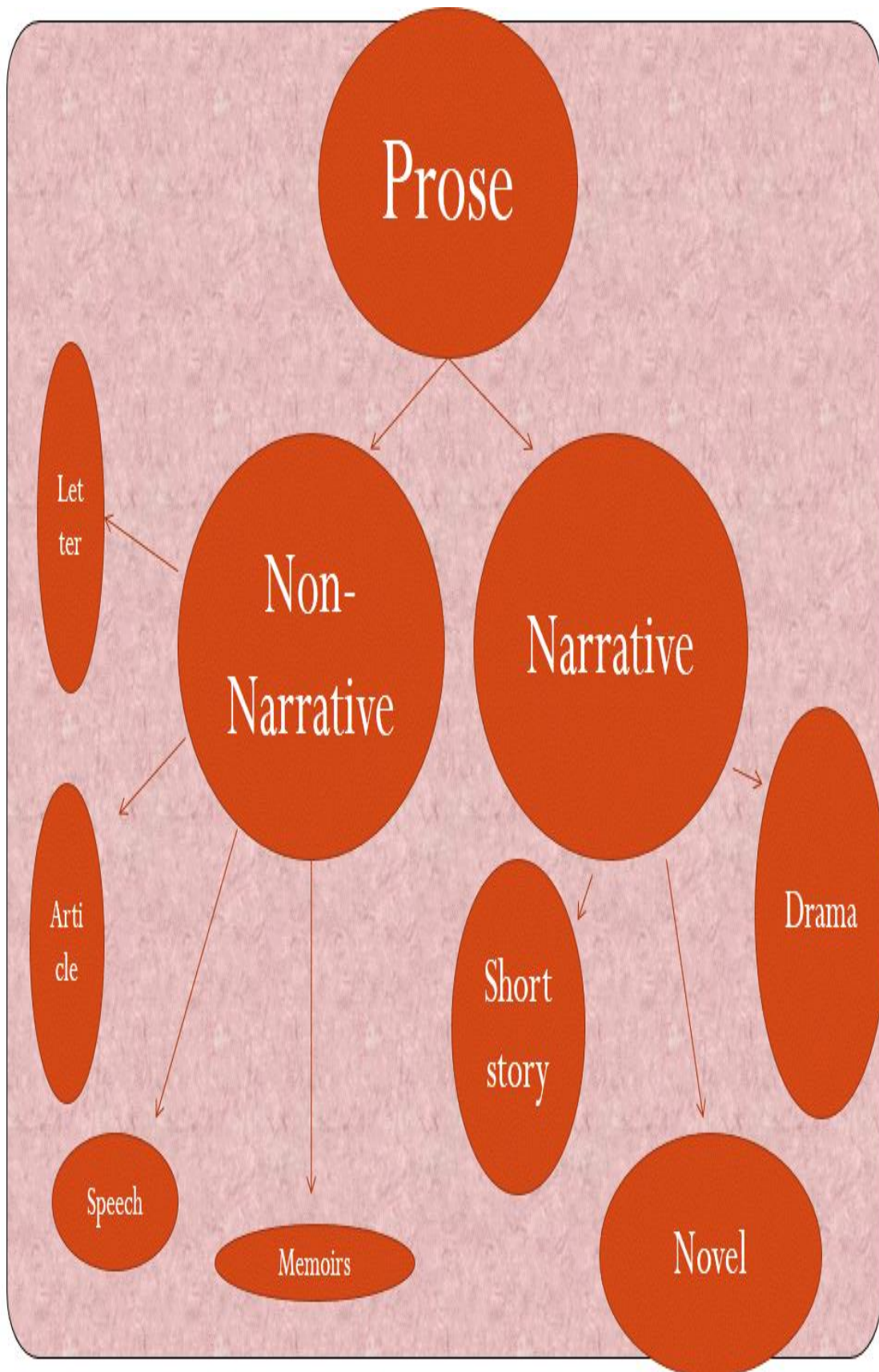
Does genre really benefit our  
understanding of this very significant  
human activity ?





Is prosody or word-music a sufficient definition of “Poetry”?

Does the absence of visible word-music accurately define “prose”?





Differences between Narrative and Non-Narrative forms of writing can perhaps be summarized in terms of the idea of “sequence”. Narrative forms of writing are characteristically structured around a major concern with three types of sequence:

- 1- Sequence of Tense.
- 2- Sequence of Events.
- 3- Sequence of emotions.

**Narrative  
means  
sequence**

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graph TD; A([Narrative means sequence]) --> B([Of Tense]); A --> C([Of Events]); A --> D([Of Emotions]);
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Of  
Tense

Of  
Events

Of  
Emotions



“Non-Narrative” includes every  
type of **normative** or regular  
writing you might think of or  
encounter in everyday life such  
as Letter, Speech, Essay  
Memoire, Article ...etc.

**Sequence of Events:** refers to the fact that each event or happening in the narrative must be positioned in its appropriate chronological order in the story or else will make no sense.

In Hamlet, for instance, he could not have sought revenge for the death of his father king, before he knew of his death in the first place?



**Sequence of tense:** refers to the correct placement of each idea or emotion according to the way in which the story develops; namely, in harmony with the sequence of events.

A character must not speak in past tense about events that have not yet happened in the story.

**Sequence of Emotions:** obviously refers to the ways in which emotions follow their proper associations in their appropriate places in the sequences of events and tenses.

A character cannot express grief, for instance, over the death of a loved-one who, according to the story, is still alive!



Narrative, however, involves a lot more than simple sequences or arrangements of events, tense or emotions. There are many other structural elements involved in the classical building of a narrative.



Literature is one of the most complex of all human products since it arguably involves nearly all of man's capacities and faculties at once. So, continuing attempts to compartmentalize its general systems and mechanisms, in its various processes of either invention or reception, or worse still, in both, under stable terminologies and/or concepts, is likely to always fall short.

What we have studied so far, does not even begin to scratch the surface of that infinite body of innovative and particularly informative human praxis called "literature".

Good Luck  
Dr. Nagy Rashwan



**Lecture 3:**  
**An Assortment of Poems**

**The Long Love That in  
My Thought Doth Harbor**  
Sir Thomas Wyatt

The long love that in my thought I harbour,  
And in mine heart doth keep his residence,  
Into my face presseth with bold pretence,  
And therein campeth displaying his banner.  
She that me learneth to love and to suffer,  
And wills that my trust, and lust's negligence  
Be reined by reason, shame, and reverence,  
With his hardiness takes displeasure.  
Wherewith love to the heart's forest he fleeth,  
Leaving his enterprise with pain and cry,  
And there him hideth, and not appeareth.  
What may I do, when my master feareth,  
    But in the field with him to live and die?  
    For good is the life, ending faithfully.

Commentary:

This is one of the most classical manifestations of the Sonnet form. It is Wyatt's translation of Petrarch's Sonnet 140. It consists of fourteen lines with the rhyme scheme of *abba abba cdccdf*. Its general theme is love and the sufferings endured by its unfulfilled passions. As such, it contains more or less a single unified idea around which all other ideas are constructed. Its metaphoric language offers maximum aesthetic impact expressing seemingly very truthful feelings and concerns. This poetic form continued from then on to become more or less the tradition of writing Sonnets throughout the subsequent history of English poetry with varying degrees of linguistic innovation and influence.

This sonnet starts with a long metaphor in which the speaker depicts his love as though it is a knight in his full armor, holding his banner in front of him to conceal his face and hide his true strength. Such strength, according to the image, conquers the speaker's heart and defeats its defenses. The first two lines speak of the deep love that inhabits the speaker's heart and thought and makes it its holding and habitual place. However, such unattainable love seems to defy the speaker in the poem teasing him, by showing itself partially to his face while pretending innocence (into my face presseth with bold pretence).

The speaking voice in the poem then refers to his beloved as her whom he taught love, but whose knowledge of love never caused him satisfaction. He continues to speak of how he could not conceal his love for her because of his great longing and passion (my trust and lust's negligence).

Even reason and modesty could not affect the speaker's love and great passion. But rather such love with its unmerciful touch and audacity (his hardiness) causes much suffering and



pain (displeasure). It conceals its true face inside the speaker's heart and leaves him suffering his yearning and affection (for pain and cry).

The speaker in the poem asks what could he do in such situation where he does not have the slightest idea where is his enemy, what is it made of and how to face it? He asks what may he do against a strong master like that, but only to try and meet him in the field of battle regardless of whether he lives or dies.

Whatever the outcome of such battle, the speaker seems to argue, the most important thing is to live or die honorably and faithfully.

## Vocabulary and Metaphors

**Therein:** in that respect, in that place or thing

**Banner :** flag; poster; large headline

**Rein :** control, restrain; control an animal by pulling on the reins

**Reverence :** modesty.

Hardiness: boldness, daring; audacity

**Wherewithal :** means; money.

**Love .... Harbor, keep his residence,**

**pressth with bold pretence,**

**spreading his banner,**

**taketh displeasure....etc:** Personifications and apostrophes. A transformation of the abstract idea of love into a human being capable of intellectual actions including maneuvering and hiding in order to heighten the impact of the amount of suffering and love felt by the speaker.

**My Master:** Metonymy. Substituting the thing named for the thing meant where the idea of love with all its power over the speaker is likened to a master toward his slave.

**Enterprise with pain and cry:** Antithesis. Enterprise is usually associated with goodness and wealth but is associated here with sufferings in order to depict the amount of it endured and the degree of acceptance practiced towards it.



### **A Renouncing of Love**

FAREWELL, Love, and all thy laws forever;  
Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more.  
Senec, and Plato, call me from thy lore,  
To perfect wealth, my wit for to endeavour;  
In blind error when I did persever,  
Thy sharp repulse, that pricketh aye so sore,  
Taught me in trifles that I set no store;  
But scaped forth thence, since, liberty is lever  
Therefore, farewell ! go trouble younger hearts,  
And in me claim no more authority:  
With idle youth go use thy property,  
And thereon spend thy many brittle darts:  
For, hitherto though I have lost my time,  
Me list no longer rotten boughs to clime.

#### Commentary:

Another of Wyatt's sonnets translated from Petrarch's Rima 189. As usual it consists of fourteen lines with the usual rhyme scheme of *abba abba cddc ee*.

It starts with a disparate dismissal of love by the speaker who seems to think of love as a burden (laws) rather than as a reason for happiness. He says good bye to love and to all its regulations and laws.

Love is seen to resemble a butcher or a fisherman who lures his victims with bait and then slaughters them on hooks.

Ancient wise men such as Plato and Senec call upon the speaker in the poem from their graves to avoid the sufferings and pain of love and to remain with his wit and wisdom by avoiding it all together. For when the he refused and insisted on continuing love punished him severely. Thus, he was taught a lesson to care only for the small harmless things rather than for love and to enjoy his freedom which is more enjoyable.

For these reasons, the speaker addresses love and tells it to go and trouble other less experienced people as he has grown too mature to be lured by its seductiveness. He asks love to control (authority) other people because he has broken free of its bondage. Go and use your tricks (property) on someone else and try all your means (many brittle darts) with them because from now on although the speaker says that he had passed his prime time, he has indeed satisfied himself fully with its fruits and know exactly what he is missing and it does not seem to be, in his view, very much.

**Vocabulary and metaphors:**

**Thy baited hooks:** personification and metonymy. Transformation of the abstract (love) into animate (butcher) with his hooks and bait, thus substituting the thing named (butcher) with the thing meant (love's sufferings and pain).

**Use thy property:** Personification. Transforming the abstract (love) to a human being in order to indicate both intention and knowledge on the speaker's part.

**Spend they many brittle darts:** Personification and Metonymy. Substituting the thing named (Cupid; the Greek mythological God of love and passion with his bow and darts) with the thing meant (love)

**Rotten boughs to climb:** Metonymy. Substituting the fruits of love with the boughs which is seen by the speaker as themselves rotten in a clear indication of their fruitlessness and triviality.



**The Charge of the Light Brigade**  
**Alfred Lord Tennyson (1854)**

I.

Half a league, half a league,  
    Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of Death  
    Rode the six hundred.  
'Forward, the Light Brigade!  
Charge for the guns!' he said:  
Into the valley of Death  
    Rode the six hundred.

II.

'Forward, the Light Brigade!'  
Was there a man dismay'd?  
Not tho' the soldier knew  
    Some one had blunder'd:  
Their's not to make reply,  
Their's not to reason why,  
Their's but to do and die:  
Into the valley of Death  
    Rode the six hundred.

III.

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon in front of them  
    Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode and well,  
Into the jaws of Death,  
Into the mouth of Hell  
    Rode the six hundred.

IV.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,  
Flash'd as they turn'd in air  
Sabring the gunners there,  
Charging an army, while  
    All the world wonder'd:  
Plunged in the battery-smoke  
Right thro' the line they broke;

Cossack and Russian  
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke  
Shatter'd and sunder'd.  
Then they rode back, but not  
Not the six hundred.

V.

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon behind them  
Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
While horse and hero fell,  
They that had fought so well  
Came thro' the jaws of Death,  
Back from the mouth of Hell,  
All that was left of them,  
Left of six hundred.

VI.

When can their glory fade?  
O the wild charge they made!  
All the world wonder'd.  
Honour the charge they made!  
Honour the Light Brigade,  
Noble six hundred!



Commentary:

'The Charge of the Light Brigade' is one of the poems which Tennyson himself calls 'newspaper poems' as it was written for a specific occasion serving a specific purpose. It was written after Tennyson had read an article in the London Times about the Battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War which was fought between Russia on one side and England, France, Turkey and Sardinia on the other.

The story of the poem entails that during that war, owing to confusion of orders, a brigade of British Cavalry charged some entrenched batteries of Russian Artillery. This blunder cost the lives of three-quarters of the six hundred horsemen engaged.

Tennyson rapidly composed his 'ballad' as he called this poem, after reading an account of the battle in the news paper.

The poem consists of six parts, and accordingly of six stanzas ending similarly with the number of soldiers comprising the Light Brigade; Six Hundred. It is about courage in the battle field, and the enthusiasm felt by soldiers who fight for a good cause and are not frightened by enemy force.

The first stanza speaks of the first order given to the brigade to enter the battle. The soldiers were ordered to charge onward for a distance of about one and half miles (half a league). All the soldiers knew they were going to die as they were riding to the 'valley of death'. The order was given to them to move forward, and charge their guns, and they all charged on again to the valley of death.

The second stanza speaks of the courage of the soldiers. Not a single one of them was dismayed, as they were moving forward, even when they knew that their orders were wrong, and that someone must have made a mistake. Their role was not to answer back or question their orders, but rather was to do their jobs as soldiers and to die doing them if that is the case. And so they rode onward into their deaths.

The third stanza attempts to describe the actual battle and the actions of the six hundred soldiers in the field. There were canons in all their sides; the right and left and the front. The exploding shells were thundering all around them. Still, however, they rode on boldly into near certain death 'the jaws of death', 'the mouth of hell'.

The fourth stanza describes the actions of the soldiers and their courage even though they were outgunned and outnumbered. They unsheathed their swords flashing them in the air as they were moving forward against the enemy gunners. They were attacking a whole army on their own astonishing the whole world. They nearly sank in the heavy smoke of the exploding artillery shells.

Yet, they broke through enemy defenses known for their riding skills and soon bent them to their will and put their swords into many of them shattering their lines. Then they rode back, but in much less numbers, as many of them lost their lives as a result of their bravery.

The fifth stanza describes the journey back. There were cannons shooting at them from all sides but the soldiers were very brave and unwavering, even though they were shot at from all directions with the exploding shells thundering all over them.

Their horses and heroes fell, but still, the soldiers who fought very well have managed to come through from the death itself. They returned much fewer in number than the six hundred.

The sixth stanza comments on the actions of the soldiers at large. The speaking voice asks if their glorious bravery could ever fade away from memory, and their courageous attack be overlooked by history. He asks the reader to honour their sacrifice and the Light Brigade they comprised for their nobility and selflessness.

## **Vocabulary and Metaphors:**

**Volley:** discharge simultaneously from two sides (as of heated words or ammunition); barrage with missiles

**Saber:** curved single-edged sword

**Cossack:** any of a number of Slavic peoples of southern Russia known for their horsemanship (mainly in czarist Russia)

**Reel:** roll up, wind onto a spool; sway, falter, move unsteadily

**Jaws of death:** Metonymy. Death is depicted like a wild animal in order to stress its viciousness and unkindness, replacing the thing meant (the badness of death) with the thing named (wild animal / jaws).

**Mouth of hell:** Metonymy and Metaphor. Replacing the thing meant (death and destruction) with the thing named (hell, meaning fire and burning). 'Hell' is seen metaphorically to resemble an animal who swallows and consumes its victim, just like the fire which also swallows and consumes its victims.



**Analysis:**

Formally speaking, 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' is a very well constructed poem. It is predominantly narrative following specific sequences of tense, events and emotions.

Each of the six stanzas comprising this poem is dedicated to one stage of the tale being narrated in both tense and events constructed consecutively as if in a fine cluster of pearls or a fine single floor building each level follows the other.

The order was first given, then the soldiers started to move, then they were faced with huge resistance, then they charged the enemy bravely, then they returned after their charge, and, as most of the soldiers were killed, the last stanza acts as a conclusion or commentary asking the reader to honor and not to forget those soldiers.

The six stanzas also meticulously follow a sequence of emotions. First is the feeling of enthusiasm and anticipation, then the feeling of professional courage as the battle was about to start, living or dying honorably for God and country, then the feeling of action and selflessness, then the actual feeling of bravery in fighting, then after many soldiers had died the same bravery in retreat, and finally the feeling of admiration and glorification for those hero soldiers offered by the speaking voice in the poem.

The speaking voice in the poem does not indulge in lyrical tone, but rather defines what he seems to see as though describing a whole scene of events. In short, the speaking voice in the poem narrates a story rather than actually speaks of his own sensations and thoughts. This is another aspect in the narrative structure of this poem.

Even the structure of each stanza follows similar patterns of organization.

They usually start with general descriptions or feelings, then in the middle of each stanza, those generalizations become more specified to the states of the soldiers, then the conclusion of each stanza wraps up the main idea involved in each stanza and affirms the main concept of the whole poem; honour and bravery in battle by repeating the small number of the soldiers involved.

But much more than that, the sound structure of the poem, not in terms of prosody, but in terms of tune and general resonance, itself offers what I might call tunic metaphor as is the case in most Tennyson's poems.

That is, a metaphor of sound effects which resembles musically the kind of meanings and ideas offered in the poem. For example, in Tennyson's poem *The Lady of Shalott*, which speaks about human loneliness, the sound structure is very sullen and quite, offering itself the kind of sullen sadness usually associated with this sort of feeling.

But, this fact is no more true in the whole of Tennyson's works than in this particular poem where phrases and lines are very short, sharp-ended and heavily alliterated:

Theirs not to make reply  
Theirs not to reason why  
Theirs but to do and die

Their telegraphic intonation and harsh syllabic division act to resemble the sound of War trumpets:

Half a league, Half a league  
Half a league forward

Cannon to right of them  
Cannon to left of them  
Cannon in front of them

As though the poem itself tells the story of a war battle fought in bravery and selflessness and acts it both at the same time. On the one hand, it tells, in words, the tale of those soldiers accentuating their acts of honor and glorifying their nobility. On the other hand, it acts by its sound structure and musical intonation the actual actions of the battle one part at a time.

**THE ROSE OF THE WORLD**  
**William Butler Yeats (1892)**

WHO dreamed that beauty passes like a dream?  
For these red lips, with all their mournful pride,  
Mournful that no new wonder may betide, (*happen, occur*)  
Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam,  
And Usna's children died.

We and the labouring world are passing by:  
Amid men's souls, that waver and give place (*fluctuate, flicker*)  
Like the pale waters in their wintry race,  
Under the passing stars, foam of the sky,  
Lives on this lonely face.

Bow down, archangels, in your dim abode: (*residence*)  
Before you were, or any hearts to beat,  
Weary and kind one lingered by his seat;  
He made the world to be a grassy road  
Before her wandering feet.



## Commentary and Analysis:

One of Yeats's shortest poems that offer much of his poetic self's continuing perspectivism on life and the modern world. More than many of his writings, this poem still more obviously offers a philosophical reflection on the nature of beauty and its relationship to death and the passage of time.

It is divided into three, five-lined, stanzas, all rhymed in a scheme of *abbab cddcd effef*. Despite this general adherence to classical poetic tools of rhyme, rhythm and stanza structure, the poem offers much less concentration on these poetic skills than on the subject of its main concern.

Like most modernistic poetry, it offers its own points of contemplation on its chosen area of interest and pushes aside all other linguistic ornaments or figuration.

Thus, **the first stanza** starts with a rhetorical question about with antithetical figuration between dreaming, and passing like a dream, in order to indicate that all beauty eventually passes away. Of course the poem describes a sort of beloved, a woman, whose lips are so red, and whose general demeanor is proud and sad.

The sadness of the lady in question is one which has philosophical connotations. It is a sadness because nothing really new happens in the world; history all but repeats itself, and beauty never remains unchanged.

'Troy' itself has passed away by the ugly changeability of the world and ended in a blaze of fire and death 'funeral gleam'. Even the children of the legendary Usna (pronounced Uskna) with all their warrior powers were ambushed and killed.

**The second stanza**, completes this picture and argues that all of us actually 'pass by' and have no real effect on the world in which we live, no matter how 'labouring' we are. We come across people who actually sell out their principles and their souls and run fast for worldly gains. And there remains the loneliness of the human face while stars change, and clouds pass by.

**The third stanza** addresses archangels to bow down to the grace of the beloved. The speaking voice tells those angels that God before creating them or any of the humans, had made this earth for her feet to step upon. In her weariness and beauty, she represents the best of humanity in his eyes, which the whole universe should be created for.

## I Would I Were a Careless Child

Lord Byron

I would I were a careless child, *for I wish I were*  
Still dwelling in my Highland cave, *reside mountains of Scotland*  
Or roaming through the dusky wild,  
Or bounding o'er the dark blue wave; *attached*  
The cumbrous pomp of Saxon pride *heavy, procession*  
Accords not with the freeborn soul,  
Which loves the mountain's craggy side, *rugged and steep*  
And seeks the rocks where billows roll. *surges of water*

Fortune! take back these cultured lands,  
Take back this name of splendid sound!  
I hate the touch of servile hands, *of a servant*  
I hate the slaves that cringe around.  
Place me among the rocks I love,  
Which sound to Ocean's wildest roar;  
I ask but this - again to rove *roam aimlessly*  
Through scenes my youth hath known before.  
Few are my years, and yet I feel  
The world was ne'er designed for me:  
Ah! why do dark'ning shades conceal  
The hour when man must cease to be?  
Once I beheld a splendid dream,  
A visionary scene of bliss:  
Truth! - wherefore did thy hated beam  
Awake me to a world like this?

I loves - but those I love are gone;  
Had friends - my early friends are fled:  
How cheerless feels the heart alone,  
When all its former hopes are dead!  
Though gay companions o'er the bowl *drink, or food*  
Dispel awhile the sense of ill'  
Though pleasure stirs the maddening soul, *restless*  
The heart - the heart - is lonely still.

How dull! to hear the voice of those  
Whom rank or chance, whom wealth or power,  
Have made, though neither friends nor foes, *enemies*  
Associates of the festive hour.  
Give me again a faithful few,  
In years and feelings still the same,  
And I will fly the midnight crew, *team, companions*  
Where boist'rous joy is but a name. *stormy, rowdy (real)*

And woman, lovely woman! thou,  
My hope, my comforter, my all!  
How cold must be my bosom now,  
When e'en thy smiles begin to pall!  
Without a sigh would I resign  
This busy scene of splendid woe,  
To make that calm contentment mine,  
Which virtue know, or seems to know.

Fain would I fly the haunts of men – *happy, willing*  
I seek to shun, not hate mankind; *avoid*  
My breast requires the sullen glen, *sad, secluded place*  
Whose gloom may suit a darken'd mind.  
Oh! that to me the wings were given  
Which bear the turtle to her nest!  
Then would I cleave the vault of heaven, *adhere*  
To flee away, and be at rest.



## Commentary

The poem encloses six unequal stanzas of Byron's most remarkable poetics expressing his feelings of alienation and individuality.

I would I were a careless child,  
Still dwelling in my Highland cave,  
Or roaming through the dusky wild,  
Or bounding o'er the dark blue wave;  
The cumbrous pomp of Saxon pride  
Accords not with the freeborn soul,  
Which loves the mountain's craggy side,  
And seeks the rocks where billows roll.

'I would I were a careless child' is an etymology for 'I wish I were a careless child' suggesting a stronger desire to disregard the modern cares of adult life in order to return to what seems to be the worthier and more humane existence of childhood. The whole stanza describes the beauty of such existence and the reasons why it is desired by the speaking voice. I wish I were a child with no cares, he suggests, living still in the un-spoilt beauty of nature as in a cave in one of the mountains of Scotland, or wandering across wild forests in the dusk's beautiful light, or even attached to one of the ocean's dark blue waves. Any part of living among nature's aspects, untarnished by the compromised being of adulthood and modernism, would be desired and sought. It is the burden of the speaking voice's pride, bearing upon him like an ugly protrusion that is responsible for preventing his free-born soul, which prefers nature and its beauty, from living its own choice.

Fortune! take back these cultured lands,  
Take back this name of splendid sound!  
I hate the touch of servile hands,  
I hate the slaves that cringe around.  
Place me among the rocks I love,  
Which sound to Ocean's wildest roar;  
I ask but this - again to rove  
Through scenes my youth hath known before.  
Few are my years, and yet I feel  
The world was ne'er designed for me:  
Ah! why do dark'ning shades conceal  
The hour when man must cease to be?  
Once I beheld a splendid dream,  
A visionary scene of bliss:  
Truth! - wherefore did thy hated beam  
Awake me to a world like this?

If you consider this sophisticated modern life as a kind of blessing or fortune, then you are mistaken, the speaking voice suggests. Please, take it back, he argues, including my very name that seems to sound grand in your ears. I hate everything about this modern life, the servitude of its people whom you can see everywhere. Let me be among nature's beauties; the ocean and the rocks that I love. I only ask to be natural again, he argues, the way I

was before in my youth. Despite my young age, he continues, I feel that I am not for this world, and eagerly await the final hour of my life. I prefer the world of dreams that is always full of joy and bliss. So, why was I awakened to such an ugly world?

I loves - but those I love are gone;  
Had friends - my early friends are fled:  
How cheerless feels the heart alone,  
When all its former hopes are dead!  
Though gay companions o'er the bowl  
Dispel awhile the sense of ill'  
Though pleasure stirs the maddening soul,  
The heart - the heart - is lonely still.

The 'self' that is in me, sometimes loves, he argues, but even the loved ones go away, and friends do not always remain. My heart feels deep loneliness when all its former wishes get disappointed by this world. Despite the fact that companions over drink or food sometimes lighten the load giving my restless soul some pleasure, my heart is still lonely.

How dull! to hear the voice of those  
Whom rank or chance, whom wealth or power,  
Have made, though neither friends nor foes,  
Associates of the festive hour.  
Give me again a faithful few,  
In years and feelings still the same,  
And I will fly the midnight crew,  
Where boist'rous joy is but a name.

It is, indeed, very false and uninviting to hear even the voices of those who are made as such by titles, wealth, authority or even by pure happenstance. I consider them, the speaking voice argues, neither friends nor enemies, but just unreal. They are only acquaintances of the drinking hour and no more. So, please, he suggests, return me back to those true friends whom years have not changed, and I will be so happy with them that the most real meaning of the word would *just* be a name by comparison to how I would feel.

And woman, lovely woman! thou,  
My hope, my comforter, my all!  
How cold must be my bosom now,  
When e'en thy smiles begin to pall!  
Without a sigh would I resign  
This busy scene of splendid woe,  
To make that calm contentment mine,  
Which virtue know, or seems to know.

Even women, whom I love and consider my only comfort, are much less to me now. Their lovely smiles do not affect me anymore, because now I would give it all up for the final contentment of death which is the only virtue that remains.

Fain would I fly the haunts of men –  
I seek to shun, not hate mankind;  
My breast requires the sullen glen,  
Whose gloom may suit a darken'd mind.  
Oh! that to me the wings were given  
Which bear the turtle to her nest!  
Then would I cleave the vault of heaven,  
To flee away, and be at rest.

I would only be happy to avoid the goals and the pity gains of modern Man. Yet, I do not hate modern Man. I only wish to avoid him, because of the harshness of his world and my sensitivity towards it. My heart, the speaking voice reveals, seeks solitude and sadness which do make me happy and push the slow pace of my life toward its end. Once there, the speaking voice suggests, I will hold on to heaven and escape the horrors of this life and finally be comfortable.



### **Analysis:**

One of the most prevalent and typical poetics of the spirit of Romanticism is their unequivocal aesthetic search for the value of permanence above all else. Their rejection of what they seem to understand as the falsehood of modern life with its glittering lights and harsh laws, seems to single out life's temporality or, rather, disposability, as their main point of objection. In the above poem, friends are not even friends unless and until they are somehow permanent, 'In years and feelings still the same', and love is not love unless and until it is also permanent 'I loves - but those I love are gone'. The secret of their adoration of nature's beauty seems to be that they somehow, despite its randomness and non-refinement 'the mountain's craggy side', it represents a kind of beauty that is self-sustained, or permanent.

But in this very poem, death takes precedence even over nature as the most beautiful, because it contains more permanence 'would I cleave the vault of heaven / To flee away, and be at rest'. Better still, death is itself part of the very absolution of nature itself. This absolution in the complete ignorance of death is glorified as the most beautiful value of permanence and also as the most complete. The world, by comparison is seen as menial, despicable and truly false; 'Truth! - wherefore did thy hated beam / Awake me to a world like this?'.

But, under all of this, lies an even grander entity to be sought and underlined; the poetic self, what we call here: the speaking voice in the poem. It is this 'self' that seems to be the background of all of this poem's arguments and sensations. It hates the falseness of the world and the ways in which 'the haunts of man' govern peoples' relationships and values. It hates the manufactured appearances of this world that are unsuitable for the uniqueness and supremacy of its concept of itself. This self which might also be seen as the poet's ego, understands its own value and individuality in the same degree with which it understands the unjust ugliness of the world in which it lives 'The world was ne'er designed for me'.

However, there is also another poetic component to the aesthetics of this poem. It has to do with the spirit of rebelliousness prevalent in most romantic poetry particularly Byron's work. Underneath all such rejection of modern life, the sophisticated world, of disposability and injustice, and all such desire to return to the unspoiled beauty of nature, and the permanence of death is an unequivocal spirit of rebelliousness against the aesthetic and moral norm of the time. Whereas modern life encourages its own values of professionalism and gain, enticing love of life and temporary pleasures, the poetic self in this poem rejects all that and prefers nature and its simple innate existence. But even beyond this, the self in the poem attaches itself to what is even more rebellious, death itself, describing it as more comfortable and beautiful than all the temporary endeavours of modern life.

At the end, all such aesthetic values bounces back to a description of the poetic self; the speaking voice in the poem. It rejects modern falsehoods, harshness and inhumanity, because it is not false or harsh or inhumane. It prefers nature's beauty because it is sensitive and delicate enough to appreciate what is 'real' and unchanging and so on.

Romanticism, it seems is more about the poetic self, than about the world's ugliness.

**And Thou Art Dead, As Young and Fair**  
**Lord Byron** (first published in 1812)

And thou art dead, as young and fair  
As aught of mortal birth;  
And form so soft, and charms so rare,  
Too soon return'd to Earth!  
Though Earth receiv'd them in her bed,  
And o'er the spot the crowd may tread    *beat with feet*  
In carelessness or mirth,  
There is an eye which could not brook    *tolerate*  
A moment on that grave to look.

I will not ask where thou liest low,  
Nor gaze upon the spot;  
There flowers or weeds at will may grow,  
So I behold them not:  
It is enough for me to prove  
That what I lov'd, and long must love,  
Like common earth can rot;  
To me there needs no stone to tell,  
'T is Nothing that I lov'd so well.

Yet did I love thee to the last  
As fervently as thou,        *intensely*  
Who didst not change through all the past,  
And canst not alter now.  
The love where Death has set his seal,  
Nor age can chill, nor rival steal,  
Nor falsehood disavow:  
And, what were worse, thou canst not see  
Or wrong, or change, or fault in me.

The better days of life were ours;  
The worst can be but mine:  
The sun that cheers, the storm that lowers,  
Shall never more be thine.  
The silence of that dreamless sleep  
I envy now too much to weep;  
Nor need I to repine    *long for*  
That all those charms have pass'd away,  
I might have watch'd through long decay.

The flower in ripen'd bloom unmatch'd  
Must fall the earliest prey;  
Though by no hand untimely snatch'd,  
The leaves must drop away:  
And yet it were a greater grief

To watch it withering, leaf by leaf,  
Than see it pluck'd to-day;  
Since earthly eye but ill can bear  
To trace the change to foul from fair. *bad*

I know not if I could have borne  
To see thy beauties fade;  
The night that follow'd such a morn  
Had worn a deeper shade:  
Thy day without a cloud hath pass'd,  
And thou wert lovely to the last,  
Extinguish'd, not decay'd;  
As stars that shoot along the sky  
Shine brightest as they fall from high.

As once I wept, if I could weep,  
My tears might well be shed,  
To think I was not near to keep  
One vigil o'er thy bed; *stay awake*  
To gaze, how fondly! on thy face,  
To fold thee in a faint embrace,  
Uphold thy drooping head; *weak, lifeless*  
And show that love, however vain,  
Nor thou nor I can feel again.

Yet how much less it were to gain,  
Though thou hast left me free,  
The loveliest things that still remain,  
Than thus remember thee!  
The all of thine that cannot die  
Through dark and dread Eternity  
Returns again to me,  
And more thy buried love endears  
Than aught except its living years.

### Commentary:

Another of Byron's contemplative insights into the futility of life and the grandness of death as the holder of ultimate comfort and beauty, this poem consists, still, of 8 unequal, but rhymed, stanzas offering a romantic 'Ode' on the meaninglessness of life and ridiculousness of its sought-after gains. This is a poetic obituary to a lost beloved and the poetic self's ways of dealing with such loss. But it is much more than this. It is a poem about Man's helplessness and temporality. Its argument defines an inner state of dissatisfaction with the laws of life and an even deeper eagerness to short-circuit them.

And thou art dead, as young and fair  
As aught of mortal birth;  
And form so soft, and charms so rare,  
Too soon return'd to Earth!  
Though Earth receiv'd them in her bed,  
And o'er the spot the crowd may tread  
In carelessness or mirth,  
There is an eye which could not brook  
A moment on that grave to look.

Thus, the first stanza starts with the article 'and', implying repetition and casual occurrence in contrast to the grandness and harshness of death itself so as to imply sarcasm between death and the ordinariness of its treatment by life. The speaking voice thus argues, you are dead despite your young age and beauty like any mortal life that must end one day. You are returned to the earth from which you were originally begotten despite your softness and charms. 'Returned' because life, as it seems from the speaking voice's point of view, is but a part of death which seems to be the only permanent value around. Despite the fact that earth receives those dead loved-ones in her mercy, and many people actually step over their graves either in respect or disinterest, the speaking voice confesses, my eyes cannot bear to even look upon your grave for a moment.

I will not ask where thou liest low,  
Nor gaze upon the spot;  
There flowers or weeds at will may grow,  
So I behold them not:  
It is enough for me to prove  
That what I lov'd, and long must love,  
Like common earth can rot;  
To me there needs no stone to tell,  
'T is Nothing that I lov'd so well.

I will not ask exactly where you might be buried, nor dare to actually look upon such a spot, he continues. There might be flowers, or random weed, growing upon your grave, so I will not look to see either in order to remember neither. It is enough for me, the speaking voice argues, to prove to myself that my beloved, whom I will always love, died and will now rot like any common part of life. No tombstone can ever put it eloquently enough that I loved you very much and that all this love meant nothing to the facts of life and death.

Yet did I love thee to the last  
As fervently as thou,  
Who didst not change through all the past,



And canst not alter now.  
The love where Death has set his seal,  
Nor age can chill, nor rival steal,  
Nor falsehood disavow:  
And, what were worse, thou canst not see  
Or wrong, or change, or fault in me.

However, I ask myself, the speaking voice states, have I loved you as much as you have loved me? But, even more curiously, has my love to you not been changed by time, your death or even the existence of other women? Has it been so perfectly pure all the time? But the worst thing now is that you can no longer see how my love is, nor can you change the situation or even blame me for my faults.

The better days of life were ours;  
The worst can be but mine:  
The sun that cheers, the storm that lowers,  
Shall never more be thine.  
The silence of that dreamless sleep  
I envy now too much to weep;  
Nor need I to repine  
That all those charms have pass'd away,  
I might have watch'd through long decay.

The best days of my life were those we spent together and the worst are those I now spend without you. The sun can shine and cheer up people and the storms can blow and sadden them, but you will no longer be able to see either. I envy your gentle sleep and silence too much to even cry over your grave and express my sadness. But I do not even need to long for you too much, because may be the situation could have been much worse had I watched you die slowly and painfully.

The flower in ripen'd bloom unmatch'd  
Must fall the earliest prey;  
Though by no hand untimely snatch'd,  
The leaves must drop away:  
And yet it were a greater grief  
To watch it withering, leaf by leaf,  
Than see it pluck'd to-day;  
Since earthly eye but ill can bear  
To trace the change to foul from fair.

You are like a flower in its finest stage growth, destined to eventually fall a prey for an animal or otherwise. It is no one's fault that it is suddenly plucked and destroyed and its leaves are gone. Yet, it is much worse to watch it wither away or decay slowly by the hands of time. There is no escaping grief by the human heart when it witnesses beauty transforms into foulness and decay.

I know not if I could have borne  
To see thy beauties fade;  
The night that follow'd such a morn  
Had worn a deeper shade:

Thy day without a cloud hath pass'd,  
And thou wert lovely to the last,  
Extinguish'd, not decay'd;  
As stars that shoot along the sky  
Shine brightest as they fall from high.

I do not know, if I could ever bear watching your beauty fade away and end. The gloom of your death, following the brightness of your life, is much deeper and darker than one can bear. Your life was pure up to its last moment. It was like a fire extinguished in its brightest climax much before its time to decay. Your life passed away like a shooting star in the sky which shines brightly for a moment and then falls down suddenly.

As once I wept, if I could weep,  
My tears might well be shed,  
To think I was not near to keep  
One vigil o'er thy bed;    *stay awake*  
To gaze, how fondly! on thy face,  
To fold thee in a faint embrace,  
Uphold thy drooping head;  
And show that love, however vain,  
Nor thou nor I can feel again.

My tears are so hard to come by, even though I once wept. But, over my beloved, I should have shed a lot of tears if even only on the fact that I was not near you at end to keep a wakening eye on you; that I was not able to eagerly look upon your face; that I was not able to hold you between my arms in your illness and raise your weak head up. My tears should have been shed to show that our love however impossible to continue, will never be felt again by you or me.

Yet how much less it were to gain,  
Though thou hast left me free,  
The loveliest things that still remain,  
Than thus remember thee!  
The all of thine that cannot die  
Through dark and dread Eternity  
Returns again to me,  
And more thy buried love endears  
Than aught except its living years.

However, it would have been much less to gain if my last memories of you are those in your death bed, when you have left many other free and lovely memories for me to enjoy. Those memories are the sum of you that cannot die or wither away through time. They come to me through the dark night in which you are now. A lot more of your love, that is now buried, reaches me, but not as much as it used to when you were alive.

## Analysis

One of the most recurrent and famous themes in all poetry, particularly Romanticism, is 'lost love' caused either by death, inevitable departure or by any other means. The reason why this theme is particularly prevalent in Romantic poetry is simply because of the Romantic extreme tendency to melancholy or deep sadness. It is in this very particular sense that this theme has come to be attached to Romanticism. Not because Romantic poetry uses it a lot as an insight into Man's feelings and hidden passions, but more importantly, because it presents it as a justification for the unworthiness of life, and the inevitability of rebelliousness against it.

In the above poem the two patterns intermix. On the one hand, there is this massive monologue about the futility of life which takes away those we love by death and the vanity of being itself. On the other hand, there is this argument about the worthiness of passion and human emotion as the only means of value, aesthetic or otherwise. Love is seen as worthy in itself against the laws of life which defy reason and cause pain. The loss of love is thus utilized as a reason for rebelling against those laws, defying their harshness.

Whether or not the incidents narrated in this poem are true is poetically of no real consequence. The sadness expressed in this particular poem for the reason of lost love, is also expressed in many other different works of Byron himself for many other different reasons leading all to the same conclusion. Loss in itself is not the theme, nor even love and its value, but rather the helplessness of man in life, and the sadness incarnated in his very existence. The poem itself has solved its own problem regarding lost love by proposing memories as a means of consolation and self defense.

Yet, the passions expressed in this poem seem truly magnificent both in their depth and aesthetic impact. The way in which the reader gets the impression that the speaking voice in the poem is attempting to cling to any faint hope of preservation for his lost love is quite touching and un-naïve. The whole poem is an extremely delicate approach to the theme of lost love in a very individualistic way which seems to support our earlier argument regarding the precedence of the poetic self in Romantic poetry.

