

ang070 S/Ü "Introduction to the Critical and Scholarly Discussion of Literature"

Assignment 1: "Analysing Poetry"

This assignment is a mandatory part of your portfolio and needs to be handed in on time. It is ungraded but you will receive feedback. Additionally, a sample solution will be published on the Institutswiki.

Please make sure to submit your assignment stapled together but not bound in any folder. Every assignment must include a cover sheet and the statement on plagiarism. You may write up to three pages of text, according to the formatting specifications of our style sheet. Any text beyond the first three pages will be ignored.

Formal and Media-specific Analysis: Communicative Situation, Theme, Figurative Speech, etc.

(1) Communicative Situation: What do you find out about the speaker, the addressee, the communicative situation?

• Speaker

deictics in first person singular ("me", "my", "I") and anaphoric demonstratives ("these ears", "these eyes")

unresponsive, disaffected ("in vain to me the smiling mornings shine")

longing, yearning ("these ears [...] for other notes repine / A different object do these eyes require")

feeling alone, forlorn ("My lonely anguish")

grief-stricken, in mourning, hopeless, inconsolable ("I fruitless mourn", "I weep")

object of loss is male ("A different object do these eyes require", "I [...] mourn to him that cannot hear")

• Addressee

no deictics in second person singular/ plural

act of mourning addressed to 'him' vs. act of writing addressed to no one in particular

(2) Theme: Identify the various sections of the poem. Comment on the theme and its development from one section to the next!

• Isotopies /recurring semantic features:

- nature description
- body parts
- life cycle and renewal
- love ("amorous", "little love")
- contrasts: I vs. other people, I vs. nature, Joy vs. sadness, company vs. loneliness

• Development: subdivision into four parts, explanation and quote

- | | | |
|-------|-------------------|--|
| 1-4 | "life" | dawn / daybreak ("morning", "Phoebus lifts his golden fire")
reawakening of life ("Phoebus", "birds", "fields");
colourful ("redd'ning", "golden", "green")
joyfulness ("smiling", "amorous descant", "cheerful") |
| 5-8 | "loss" | speaker's insusceptibility to these manifestations of renewal ("these ears, alas!", "these eyes")
absent/ missing object of desire ("for other notes repine", "a different object [...] require")
desertedness, futility ("My lonely anguish") |
| 9-12 | "mutability" | liveliness, rush, fast pace, also relentlessness ("busy race")
constant renewal ("new-born pleasures", "little ones")
'business as usual' ("wonted tribute") |
| 13-14 | "inconsolability" | irretrievability of loss, hopelessness of grief, bereavement ("I fruitless mourn", "I weep in vain") |

• Topic: death, loss and mourning; (wider context: pastoral-elegiac tradition)

(3) Figurative Speech: Identify two different metaphors from this poem and analyse one of them closely. Identify one other figure of speech and give an example from the poem.

- "the smiling mornings shine": metaphor
- "redd'ning Phoebus lifts his golden fire": metaphor
- "cheerful fields resume their green attire": metaphor
- "these ears": synecdoche (pars pro toto)
- "these eyes": synecdoche (pars pro toto)
- "my lonely anguish melts no heart but mine": metaphor
- "in my breast": synecdoche
- "morning smiles": metaphor
- "new-born pleasure": metaphor
- "the fields to all their wonted tribute": metaphor

(4) Comment on genre, metre, interplay and rhyme scheme.

• Genre

Petrarchan / Italian sonnet, an octave followed by a sestet;
Problems: alternate rhymes and subdivisions suggest Shakespearean/ English Sonnet

• Dominant metre

iambic pentameters

• Interplay

"imperfect" (I.8), corresponding to both the irregularity of the meter and the emotional state of grief that sets the speaker apart from his perfectly cheerful environment; **however**: this is in fact an elision, the poem is in regular metre (the speaker has to submit to metre/fate)

- Rhyme scheme

abab abab (octave; use of alternate rhymes rather than enclosing rhymes marks a variation of the Italian sonnet's traditional rhyme scheme)

cddcdd (sestet; another variation of the Italian sonnet's rhyme scheme: cde cde)

Functional Analysis: Toward a Problem-oriented Sample Analysis

Build your functional analysis on the data generated through your formal analysis and suggest a possible problem orientation:

(5) Identify a research problem on the basis of your formal analysis.

Death and renewal/rebirth:

- use of imagery
- conventions of elegiac literature

Homoeroticism:

- homosocial vs. homosexual desire

One-sided communication, unrequited 'love'

Comparison: Correspondence and/or Contrast

(6) Suggest one other poem that corresponds and/or contrasts with the given poem in an aspect relevant to the research problem you have specified.

Death and renewal/rebirth:

- Rupert Brooke. "The Soldier."

Homoeroticism:

- Lord Alfred Douglas. "In Praise of Shame."

Suffering from one-sided communication

- George Herbert. "Deniall."

(7) Briefly discuss how both texts relate to this problem. Address potential differences in representation and their possible functions.

Sonnet on the Death of Mr. Richard West

Thomas Gray

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
 And redd'ning Phoebus lifts his golden fire:
 The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
 Or cheerful fields resume their green attire:
 These ears, alas! for other notes repine,
 A different object do these eyes require.
 My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
 And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.
 Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
 And new-born pleasure brings to happier men:
 The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
 To warm their little loves the birds complain.
 I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
 And weep the more because I weep in vain.

Explanations:

l.2 Phoebus

Greek god, associated, among other things, with light and with the sun

l.9 race

here: mankind