

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 a sample solution will be published on the Institutswiki. Additionally, you can receive feedback in the office hours of your respective instructors.

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. Present your results in complete sentences. 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, Themes, Figurative Speech, etc.

(1) Communicative Situation: What do you find out about the speaker, the addressee, the communicative situation? Later, in the light of your complete formal analysis, revisit this task and briefly discuss the function of the complexity of the perspectives involved (cf. (5)).

Speaker: "We" (l. 3)

- First person plural pronoun suggests a group of speakers or one individual from a group of speakers who visited an artist's studio at some point in the past.
- Markedly and extraordinarily unspecific and unclear, i.e. identity of the speaker(s) is not otherwise specified, however:
- Highly perceptible gaze of the speakers, who see more than the artist himself (namely his obsession/fixation) and more than is actually shown in the paintings (namely the artist's misrecognition of the woman "hidden" behind all these likenesses gone astray)

Addressee: no addressee

- No second person pronouns
- No imperatives

Time/ Use of different tenses

- Shifts between past tense and present tense
- Past tense is used to refer to
 - (a) the speakers' visit to the artist's studio ("We found" (l. 3); "That mirror gave back" (l. 4))
 - (b) the time of the actual portrait session ("as she [...] was when hope shone bright" (l.1-13))
- Present tense is used to refer to the timelessness (maybe immutability) of the representation ("one face looks" (l. 1); "One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans" (l. 2); etc.)
- Different tenses used to demonstrate the discrepancy between the present and the past ("Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright" (l. 13))

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

Theme(s)/Topic(s)

The artist (including third person pronouns)

- "In an Artist's Studio" (title); "His canvases" (l. 1); "He feeds upon her face" (l. 9); "on him" (l. 10); "his dream" (l. 14)

The woman (including third person pronouns)

- "We found her hidden" (l. 3); "her loveliness" (l. 4); "she" (l. 13); "she" (l.14); perhaps also (ambivalent): "her face" (l. 9); "she" (l. 10); "she" (l. 14)

The representation (including third person pronouns)

- "One face looks" (l. 1); "One selfsame figure" (l. 2); "a queen" (l. 5); "a nameless girl" (l. 6); "a saint" (l. 7); "an angle" (l. 7); perhaps also (ambivalent): "her face" (l. 9); "she" (l. 10); "she" (l. 14)

Isotopies

Ways of Seeing/ Gazes:

- "One face looks out" (l. 1); "We found her hidden"(l. 3); "That mirror" (l. 4); "with true kind eyes looks back" (l. 10); "when hope shone bright" (l. 13)

(Conventionalised) Representations, including female stereotypes, nature imagery:

- "his canvases" (l. 1); "those screens" (l. 3); "that mirror" (l. 4); "a queen" (l. 5); "a nameless girl" (l. 6); "a saint" (l. 7); "an angel" (l. 7); "every canvas" (l. 7); "she with true kind eyes" (l. 9); "fair as the moon" (l. 11); "joyful as the light" (l. 11)

Adoration/ Fixation/ Obsession:

- "every canvas means // the same one meaning, neither more or less" (l. 7-8); "He feeds upon her face" (l. 9); "as she fills his dreams" (l. 14)

Development of the Theme(s)

- Octave: The speakers' perspective.

The speaker(s) look at the pictures in the studio and discern a possible discrepancy between numerous representations of one and the same woman ("One face" (l.1); "One selfsame figure" (l.2)) on the one hand, and the woman herself ("We found her hidden" (l.3) on the other hand.

The diversity of the different representations of the woman is demonstrated seeing that the paintings show her in different poses, namely as she "sits or walks, or leans" (l. 2), and in different settings, e.g. as "a queen" (l.5), "a nameless girl" (l. 6), "a saint" (l. 7), or "an angle" (l. 7). However, in spite of these variations, the significance and the import all of these paintings are always the same ("every canvas means the same one meaning, neither more nor less" l. 8).

- Sestet: The artist's perspective.

The artist's perspective, more specifically his gaze, is described in a way that reveals his adoration for/obsession with the woman, as he figuratively "feeds upon her" (l. 9) and compares her to the beauties of nature. However, the ending exposes a misrecognition/ misreading on the side of the artist as, he has come to construe her image according to his own fantasies, i.e. "his dream" (l. 14), on account of his adoration/obsession/fixation.

OR:

- First Quatrain: The speaker's perspective
The speaker(s) look at the pictures in the studio and discern a possible discrepancy between numerous representations of one and the same woman ("One face" (l.1): "One selfsame figure" (l.2)) on the one hand, and the woman herself ("We found her hidden" (l.3) on the other hand.
- Second Quatrain: The artist's constructions, his representations of the woman
The variety of the different representations of the woman is demonstrated as the paintings show her in different poses, namely as she "sits or walks, or leans" (l. 2), and in different settings, e.g. as "a queen" (l.5), "a nameless girl" (l. 6), "a saint" (l. 7), or "an angle" (l. 7). However, in spite of these variations, the significance and the import all of these paintings are always the same ("every canvas means the same one meaning, neither more nor less" l. 8).
- Third Quatrain: The artist's perspective
The artist's perspective, more specifically his gaze, is described in a way that reveals his adoration for/obsession with the woman, as he figuratively "feeds upon her" (l. 9) and compares her to the beauties of nature.
- Couplet: The speaker's deconstruction of the artist's perspective
The ending of the sonnet exposes a misrecognition/ misreading on the side of the artist as, he has come to construe her image according to his own fantasies, i.e. "his dream" (l. 14), on account of his adoration/obsession/fixation.

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

Rhyme Scheme

- abbaabba cdcd(d) indicates a traditional Petrarchan subdivision into octave and sestet

Metre

- dominant metre: iambic pentameter

Interplay

- no strong use of interplay, not functionalised; variations in the beginning of lines 1; 11; 13; 14

Genre

- Mixed Form:
The rhyme scheme indicates a subdivision into an octave (consisting of enclosing rhymes) and a sestet (here – somewhat unconventionally – consisting of alternate rhymes) which is indicative of the Petrarchan/Italian sonnet; however, both the development of the theme (cf. (2)) and the anaphora in lines 13-14 suggest a Shakespearean/English sonnet.

(4) Figurative Speech: Analyse the metaphor "[h]e feeds upon her face" (l. 9) closely. Which other figure of speech is salient in lines 9-12?

Literal: he _____ her face
Figurative: __ feeds upon _____

Tenor: he is sustained by/ gains sustenance from/ incorporates [einverleiben; zum Überleben brauchen] her face

Vehicle: Someone who feeds upon something is sustained by/ gains sustenance from/ incorporates [einverleiben; zum Überleben brauchen] it

Ground: The artist gains sustenance from the face of the woman like he gains sustenance from the food that he needs to stay alive.

Similes: "fair as the moon" (l. 11); "joyful as the light" (l. 11)

(5) As indicated in (1): Relate your findings on theme(s), genre, metre, interplay, rhyme scheme, and figurative speech to the communicative situation.

The complexity of the perspectives involved problematises different ways of seeing: First of all, the artist (mis-)recognizes and (mis-)represents the woman. His paintings do not create a 'true' likeness of her (as she supposedly 'really is) but show her as he imagines her to be, owing to his obsession or fixation.

Secondly, however, the speaker(s) see more than the artist himself, as the paintings reveal more about the artist than about his model, i.e. his obsession/ fixation; but also, as they recognise the artist's misrecognition/ misrepresentation in the first place, which allows them to expose the discrepancy between the woman (model) and her representation (painting).

As a result, the speakers effectively deconstruct the artist's male gaze in this poem, i.e. they demonstrate how any representation (be it a written text, a painting, a film, etc.) is an elaborate and mediated construction and, therefore, never the same as 'reality' or the 'truth'.

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) Identifying a research problem on the basis of your formal analysis.
- (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.
- (7) Briefly discuss how both texts relate to this problem. Address potential differences in representation and their possible functions.

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)
In an Artist's Studio

One face looks out from all his canvases,
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:
We found her hidden just behind those screens,
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
A saint, an angel — every canvas means
The same one meaning, neither more or less.
He feeds upon her face by day and night,
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

Explanatory Notes

- l. 1 "canvases" *here*: paintings
- l. 2 "one selfsame" one and the same
- l. 3 "screen" *here*: pictures, paintings
- i. 5 "opal" opalescent, shimmering white
- l. 12 "wan" faded; pale, faint
- l. 13 "dim" blurry; forlorn, melancholy