

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, Theme, Figurative Speech, etc.

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

Speaker:

- The speaker as a lover whose pessimism/disenchantment/disillusionment with romantic notions of love and relationships eventually shows in his/her reduction of love to a mere biological function, even though he/she is at present willing to play along with these romantic notions and to perform the conventional rites of love.

l.1: "I shall forget", "**my** dear"

l.4: "ere I forget"

l.6: "I shall forget", "I said"

l.7: "you entreat **me**"

l.8: "I will protest you", "**my** favorite vow"

l.9: "I would"

- The speaker and his/her partner as a couple whose break-up, however, is imminent so that 'couplehood' is only briefly suggested to be undone "forever".

l.5: "**we** are done"

- Either the speaker and his/her partner again, or the speaker as a part of the species human beings, more generally, whose desire to find fulfilment is inconsequential as it is constantly thwarted by nature's/ biology's mutability and ongoing/relentless/ indifferent inclination to change.

l.13: "**we** find", "**we** are seeking"

Addressee:

- The addressee is the speaker's lover who is encouraged/recommended to seize the moment that they both share in the present as the break-up of their/any relationship is a natural 'fact' and, therefore, inevitable.

- l.1: "you"
- l.2: "make" (imperative), "your little day"
- l.3: "Your little month", "your little half a year"
- l.6: "I shall forget you"
- l.7: "you entreat me", "your loveliest lie"
- l.8: "you"

(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):

The major theme in the poem is the contrast between idealised/romanticised notions of love on the one hand, and natural (-scientific)/biological notions of love on the other hand; the latter notions, however, are validated, while the former are playfully undermined and ultimately represented as "idle" or inconsequential.

- love and love relationships as represented from the point of view of idealised/romanticised notions of love
 - conventional vocabulary of love poetry/ the sonnet ("dear", "[done] forever", "loveliest [lie]", "favorite vow", "love" "seeking") [even if these are already playfully undermined]
 - genre (love as a conventional topic of sonnets)
- love and love relationships as represented from the point of view of nature/biology
 - conventional vocabulary of natural-scientific discourse ("nature", "idle", "biologically speaking")

Development, following the structure of the English sonnet (with irregularity in lines 4/5):

- l.1-5: affirmation of the fleeting character of love relationships and appeal to seize the moment
- l.5-8: (conditional) affirmation of the conventional rites of love/wooing/dating; however: these conventions are exposed as performative and ritualised
- l.9-12: contrast between idealised/romantic notions of love ("I would") and natural (-scientific) notions of love ("But so it is"); re-affirmation of love as an impermanent condition (tragic)
- l.13-14: reason for the impermanent condition of love: biology
love as a biological function (comic); so that the punchline reveals a biological perspective which ultimately mocks/ridicules human behaviour regarding love

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

English Sonnet:

- rhyme scheme: abab cdcd ef(e)f gg
Shakespearean rhyme scheme consisting of alternate rhymes and a rhyming couplet at the end. Slight irregularity ("longer-lived" – "contrived"), possibly emphasising the irreconcilability of romantic ideals of love on the one hand, and nature/biology on the other.

- structure: three quatrains and one couplet. According to the rhyme scheme this structure is regular; according to content, however, the first subdivision is introduced in line (5)
- (dominantly) iambic pentameters; however:
caesura in line five provides a halt before the anaphora
elision: "loveliest" (l.7)
couplet: "seeking" (l.13), "speaking" (l.14) – extra unstressed syllable at the end of each line [feminine ending]

Italian Sonnet:

- less plausible option: the rhyme scheme is clearly that of an English/Shakespearean sonnet; however, with regard to content (and punctuation), a subdivision into octave and sestet is also possible, if not entirely convincing

(4) Figurative Speech: Identify one metaphor from this poem and analyse it closely. Comment on the frequency and use of figurative speech in the poem.

Metaphor:

- Metaphor: "[I would that] vows were not so brittle as they are" (l.10)
Literal: "[I would that] vows were not so _____ as they are"
Figurative: "[I would that] _____ were not so brittle as they are"
Tenor: "[I would that] vows were not so [liable to break/impermanent] as they are"
Vehicle: "[I would that] [bones/glass] were not as brittle as they are"
Ground: The vows of lovers are as liable to break/impermanent as bones and glass are brittle.

Metaphor:

- "that love were longer-lived" (l.9)
 - "nature has contrived" (l. 11)
- altogether very few figures of speech
- contrast is not primarily presented on the stylistic level (literal and figurative meaning) but on the thematic level (cf. idealised/romanticised notion of love vs. natural(-scientific)/biological notion of love)

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: Briefly suggest how the manner of speaking (tasks (3) and (4)) complements the communicative situation (task 1) and the theme(s) (task 2).

(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.

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)

"I shall forget you presently, my dear"

I shall forget you presently, my dear,
So make the most of this, your little day,
Your little month, your little half a year,
Ere I forget, or die, or move away,
And we are done forever; by and by
I shall forget you, as I said, but now,
If you entreat me with your loveliest lie
I will protest you with my favorite vow.
I would indeed that love were longer-lived,
And vows were not so brittle as they are,
But so it is, and nature has contrived
To struggle on without a break thus far,
Whether or not we find what we are seeking
Is idle, biologically speaking.

Explanations:

l.1	presently	soon, instantaneously
l.8	protest	to assure, to reassure
l.14	idle	insignificant, inconsequential, futile