POETIC FORMS — THE LYRIC

It is always useful to divide poems into classes or groups; but it would be wise not to be too categorical. In the London Book of English Verse, Herbert Read and Somary Dobree have classed pieces among a wide range of types: a narrative poem, a sonnet, lyrical verse, descriptive verse, moralistic verse, The Symphonic poem, satirical verse etc. The editors themselves realize that the arrangement is neither logical, psychological nor architectonic, nor, for that matter final; since poetry no more than human life, can be fitted into pigeon-holes. Many poems might well find a place in one, or even two, other sections. Lyricus i.e., for example, an elegy, a pastoral elegy and a symphonic poem. So is Agonis.

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3. W. Deakin Maclean, Englished and Englished of English
1. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Introduction to the Study of English
Literature, p. 201. (Anrema Nanda Kumar).
2. G.K. Luriea - muce song-like.
difficult to define or discuss its form in terms of content the love-lyric and the satire; sometimes we look for the 'lyrical' quality in other kinds of verse as the dramatic monologue, the idyll or the descriptive poem. Any kind of generally speaking a lyric is a short form poem in which classification is valuable mainly as a means of 'sensing a single action or single mood, usually personal, is too ordering a body of infinite complexity'.

In the following pages, an attempt is made to estimate the influence exerted by English poetic forms on Malayalam poetry. The method is preferred because it examines poetry from different points of view and presents results in all their bearings. The lyrical and non-lyrical qualities of poetry shall be the main basis of the classification.

The Lyric:

In ancient Greece the lyric was a song sung to the accompaniment of the lyre. In English literature the term is now loosely applied to many kinds of poem whether designed as songs or not. Under its accommodating umbrella take refuge such as diversity of sub-genres as the song, the elegy, the ode, the sonnet, the epistle and the idyll. Therefore it is

2. GK. Lurikos - means song-like.
difficult to define or discuss its form in terms of content and structure.

"Generally speaking a lyric is a short, free poem in which a single emotion or single mood, usually personal, is reflected. It is always short and seldom more than a hundred lines long. The reason is that an intense feeling or an ecstasy which goes to make a lyric does not last long. It blazes up to a white heat and dies away in a moment. The best lyric poems always strike a universal note. It is this universal in the particular that is indeed the most characteristic feature of lyric verse."

The subjective element is common in lyric poetry. All lyrics must finally retain the poet's personality, if not his thoughts and feelings directly, at least the temper of his sensibility. "A lyric is not a record of the poet's personal experience, but rather the record of his imaginative experience, the former being no more than a stepping board to the latter." A lyric is distinguished from narrative or dramatic poetry in which telling a story and analysing character are primary aims. It is idle to legislate

to the lyric poet either the theme or length or technique of the poem. An elegy for example could be as short as the four-line elegy of Herrick or as long as Shelley's reflective elegy Adonais or as obscure as Gerard Manley Hopkins' The Wreck of the Deutschland. A lyric may be a spontaneous outburst of a sincere feeling like Tennyson's Break, Break, Break, a ponderous philosophical reflection like Wordsworth's Ode on Intimations of Immortality, an expression of poignant love like Robert Burns' Highland Mary, religious ecstasy like Herbert's The Pulley, natural like Collins' Ode to Evening, idealistic like Lovelace's To Lucasta, cynical like Housman's When I Was One and Twenty, and melancholic like Matthew Arnold's Dover Beach. Again it may be written as part of a play or a long poem. There may be as many kinds of lyric poem as there are moods to be sung and degrees of emotional intensity in the singer.

The English lyric attained its highest excellence during the 16th and the 17th Centuries. The Elizabethan bards are sometimes referred to as a nest of singing birds. It is no accident that the same period is also a glorious chapter in English musical history. Literature expresses the character of a society and in the psychology of the Renaissance music played an important part. The poetry of Wyatt and Surrey marked the first English poetry of the Renaissance.
They modelled their work upon Italian forms and attempted a great variety of metrical experiments like songs, sonnets and elegies, occasionally imitative but with touches of grace and fantasy. With the French Revolution and the so-called Renaissance of Wonder came the new lyricism in wave after wave, and in the work of Blake and Burns, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats, Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, Morris, Swinburne and the Rossettis and two or three generations of their successors the lyric flourished as a poetic form most suited to the age and its sensibility.

An outstanding feature of Modern Malayalam poetry is the triumph of the lyric. The early folk songs and 'slokas' have a definitely distinct lyrical quality. These oldest songs are almost impossible to describe them in any one else, but fresh with the dew of the dawn of the civilization, bear a halo of unique simplicity and charm about them. Some earlier poets also have made use of love, the perennial theme of lyric poetry. However, it is with the New Age that the lyric reaches its highest excellence. With the great poets Asan, Ulloor and Vallathol, the short lyric reached its peak of perfection, and to mark it even with his help. But once the effort is marked not only by the colouring of human passion but by beauty and rapidity of movement. In their hands it is the most concentrated form of poetry, a short arrow-like flight of meaning and melody. The modern lyric with its enchanting
subdivisions threw open to the young writers an infinite variety of wealth. Thanks to the marvellous capacity of the language for assimilation of foreign material, it had a quick and vigorous growth. Besides the love-lyrics many new forms like elegies, Odes and sonnets, were attempted. Each of these very clearly defined type of poetry. It simply refers to a poetical type has now become popular and won distinct ground in poetry.

During the English Renaissance, Wyatt and Surrey wrote a number of Odes, but probably the first poem worthy of that name was Kyper's translation of Horace's Odes. In 1558, nearly every life knows at least one moment of sudden uplift. It is a moment which affects both the mind and the heart. Such moments come strangely and without warning, and it is almost impossible to describe them to any one else. But they are so full of wonder, so far above any other thought, that we remember them always and with awe.

The great poet puts this transforming experience into words. It is not always easy for others to attain his heights and to share it even with his help. But once the effort is made the reward is rich. When the poet reaches such peaks, the air he breathes is more 'rarefied' and his thoughts are far above the level of daily existence.
uplifted and excited, his poetry takes on a new expression, and this form of emotional excitement is known as the Ode. 

The term 'Ode' is not used in English to describe a very clearly defined type of poetry. It simply refers to a long lyric poem that is fairly serious in subject-matter, formal in style and usually written in a complex stanza pattern. 

During the English Renaissance, Wyatt and Surrey wrote a number of odes, but probably the first poem worthy of that name was Spenser's *Epithalamion* or *Marriage Ode*. In 1668, Cowley published his *Pindaric Odes* and the style at once becomes fashionable. Then came the odes of Dryden which were considered 'a bundle of rambling, incoherent thoughts expressed in a like parcel of irregular stanzas'. In 1746 Collins published his volume of odes and in 1757 Gray published his two *Pindaric Odes*, *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*. Since the time of Gray the regular *Pindaric ode* fell into disuse and the ode became a succession of regular stanzas or as irregular as any of Cowley's. 

The English Ode has coursed along three main channels merging at times with the stream of the Lyric. The three

4. The word is derived from the GK. verb meaning to sing.
Channels are (1) Poems of uniform stanzas (regular arrangement of stanza) as in Gray's short odes, odes of Keats and of Swinburne. (2) Poems of irregular stanzas, as in Gray's Pindaric Odes, Wordsworth's Immortality Ode or the free forms used by Coleridge and Tennyson or G.M. Hopkins' Wreck of the Deutschland. Laurence Binyon has also written a number of irregular odes. (3) Pinder's heroic odes on themes of praise, patriotic sentiment, reverence, revery and commendation.

In subject matter and occasion the English odes show a wide variety. From the time of Pinder the Ode was used to celebrate a formal occasion such as the Olympic games. Dryden's ode, "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day" is an example of such an occasional piece. Most English odes, especially of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, are not pinned to any such specific occasion. They are apt to be serious pieces meditating on some more general aspect of human experience. Milton composed an ode to celebrate Christ's nativity (On the Morning of Christ's Nativity). Dryden wrote an ode to music in Alexander's Feast and another to the memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew, a great poetess and a painter. Wordsworth wrote an Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood and Coleridge one on
Dejection. Tennyson composed an Ode on Wellington.

It can be seen in some of the odes mentioned above that abstractions like Truth, Virtue, Fancy and sorrow are generally personified. This is in keeping with the exalted tone of the poems, the themes of which are great and lofty. Thus we have an ode to Simplicity (Collins), an Ode to Duty (Wordsworth) an Ode to Liberty (Shelley) and so on. The odes of Dryden, Gray, Collins, Wordsworth and Shelley reveal occasionally stiffness of phraseology, over elaboration of form, but the odes of Keats are free from these defects.

With Keats the subject of the ode itself is not necessarily a lofty one; but his intense feeling and wonderful imagination brought the ode as a form of poetical expression to the heights of art. The regular ode reached its culmination in his hand. He never attempted the classic variety of the Ode Pindaric or Horatian. As an odist he is confined to the modern romantic ode with preference for the stanzacic form of which he is the greatest master. His odes

5. Swinburne considers the Ode on a Grecian Urn the triumphant achievement and accomplishment of the very utmost possible beauty possible to human words.
employing a highly developed technique. The ode is not

are not choric, but purely personal and subjective. They

a magnificent combination of excitement with a sense of order,

are the most characteristic, richest and most harmonious

of liberty with law, which will go far to explain the

expression of the full current of his soul, his keen sense

of the beauty of nature and the significance of art and

mythology.

The first Malayalam Sans poet to use this new genre

Professor E. de Selincourt sums up the characteristic

of the modern English ode thus: "It is always in the form of

an address or invocation. It is sufficiently long to distingui-

sh it from the lyric proper. It, language is singularly

exalted in style and dignified in tone. The volition of

thought in it is always measured, distinct and logical. The

structure is invariably sufficiently elaborate. It is marked

by the poignancy of feeling, richly assimilated meditative texture,

solemn splendour of imagery and flawless workmanship. The ode

is remarkable for its Hellenic clarity chiselled beauty and

inexorable poetic afflatus. It surprises us with its brooding

sweetness, long drawn-out melody, fine excess and glorious

independence".

If the ballad is an example of spontaneous lyricism,

with a narrative intention, an example of sophisticated

lyricism is found in the ode. The ode is the product of a

conscious artist, working not naively, but deliberately and
employing a highly developed technique. The ode is a
magnificent combination of excitement with a sense of order,
of liberty with law, which will go far to explain the
permanence of its appeal.

The first Malayalam Kam poet to use this new genre
was A.R. Rajaraja Varma, and the ode he wrote was (1) Malaya
Vilasan (1895). This poem (Ode to the Malaya Mountains)
addressed to a mountain has all the qualities of a modern
romantic ode. Though it treats only a familiar theme in a
simple style, it evidently strikes a new attitude and is in
a new stanzaic structure.

On his way back to Trivandrum from Madras the poet saw
from the train the Sahya Hills (Western Ghats) which filled
his soul/emotions of indescribable awe, mountains heaped upon
the back of one another, making a most stupendous appearance
of savage nature. The result was this ode to a Mountain. The
first few lines of the poem describe its vastness, wildness and
inaccessibility. Then the poet indulges in a chat
with the gentle wind on the welfare of his king and his country-
men. And returns again to appreciative lines on the magnificence
and invincibility of the mountain ranges:

How high you lift your lofty eminence
Proud Mountain, the clouds are round your breast
Well nigh you block the progress of the sun,
The 'eye unique' of all the world we live. 6

The legendary birth of Kerala is then hinted at. The Sahya hills had been intended by its founder to be a citadel of strength. The hill that tapers at the south, it so appears to the poet, is showing respect to 'Kumari', the daughter of the Himalayas, the king of mountains. He does not fail to describe the flora and fauna in the mountain ranges that appeal to all the world. In the end the poet gratefully remembers how the lofty eminence of the Sahya Hills affords shelter to all without any discrimination. It particularly blesses the people of Kerala with plenty of rain and fertility to the land.

The imaginal design of Shelley's Ode to the West Wind is vaguely comparable to the design of Malaya Vilasaam. In both, the imaginative power of the poets makes outward scenes of nature to serve their symbolic purposes without any sacrifice of her inward dynamic energy. In Shelley's Ode the idea of the West Wind as a destroyer and a preserver runs through the whole poem as the central motif. The swift and proud wind sweeps away the old in storms and gently fosters the new with zephyr. The poem begins with autumn and ends with

6. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No. 1.
spring; and the wind is the spirit of destruction and regeneration, the common power that moves through both. In Malaya Vilasam, the mountain plays the same role of a preserver and destroyer. It is the invincibility of the mountain that makes it a destroyer, particularly of the enemies of the people of Kerala. The mountain is a preserver so far as it rears clouds on its shadowy breasts and offers its people plenty of rain and subsequent prosperity in life.

The first ten stanzas describe the tender birth and the careful growth of the lovely flower 'sun-steeped at noon' and in the 'sweet nightly dew.' Deep in sleep and smiles, she dreams of the promises of all her beauty to her lord beloved. Moons flit by, and alas! the sweet and fair flower of the day soon meets with its cruel fall. And there she lies bare on the ground

(2) Venga Poovu (Ode on a Fallen Flower)

This majestic elegiac ode is a highly poetic and figurative expression of generalised sentiments. It is the first fullest expression what is new and progressive, what is free and inspired in the Romantic poetry. The poem also marks Kumaran Asan's first triumphant utterance of his
romantic taste for the sublime. In sustained lyrical
splendour, the poem has hardly any other match even among
his own works.

The poem is a dignified lament. It is addressed to
a fallen flower and in it the poet expresses his sad feelings
at the death and decay of the lovely bloom. The thought-
pattern of this fine ode falls into three major sections.
The first ten stanzas describe the tender birth and the
careful growth of the lovely flower 'sun-steeped at noon'
and in the 'moon nightly dew-fed'. Soon the charm and smile
that dawn on her petals tempt a world of suitors to her-
butterflies and honey-bees of all colours and character.
She spurns the butterflies and extends a warm welcome to a
kingly-bee that came from a far off place. Then she surrenders
the wealth of her beauty to her lord beloved. Hours flit
by and alas! the sweet and fair flower of the day soon meets
with its great fall. And there she lies bare on the ground
shorn of all her former glory and glamour.

The following twenty stanzas present the mourners of the
tragic event, the chief among them being the lordly-bee. He
is in a mood of terrible dejection at the sudden loss of his
fair partner. In his despair he is seen tracing the trail of
of a flower, it is also a poem on the mortality of the flesh.
her fragrance hoping to interrupt her spirit on its way to
heaven. There are other mourners as well. The spider has
woven a silken shroud around her, and the dawn has placed a
wreath of pearly dew-drops on the dead, the sparrow sings
her requiem and the sun looks wan and pale over the
westerchills and the wind sobs in disquiting grief.

The last eleven stanzas provide the consecrated feature
of the traditional elegy - the turn at the close - after
lamentation, the philosophic consolation. First, the poet
ponders over the transitoriness and the mortality of life
and comes to the conclusion that it is no use weeping
because death is the inexorable law of Nature. The flower
after its earthly mission might reappear in heaven perhaps
to adorn the tresses of the blessed damseels there to the
delight of (devas) (angels) or to be a floral offering in a
ritual for the eternal priests. After the Vedanta religion
the poet, thus hopes immortality for the flower after its
imperfect offices in quest of mundane pleasure.

7. It bears the critical condition of Swarup Asan's spiritual
mortality and transience of all earthly life.

Though the theme of Yagna Sacyu is the mortality
of a flower, it is also a poem on the mortality of the flesh.

9. Translation of: The Original Text at the end, No. 61.
The sorrow of the poet at the sad state of the flower corresponds in all its details to a similar mood of melancholy he might have felt in an identical human tragedy. The poet must have only used the flower as a convenient symbol to project his private feelings. However there is no open admission of this in the poem. Till the last line of the 30th stanza of the poem Asan cleverly conceals the human theme, but in its last line he makes the first overt moral statement:

"Whom gods love die young" and prepares the reader for an open statement separating the flower theme and the human theme.

We will all then take your course
And follow one after the other.

In the final stanza the suggestive words 'eye' and 'tear' make it quite obvious that he has been preoccupied more with the human tragedy than with the private sorrow for

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7. It is recorded that the occasion of the composition of Veena Poovu was the critical condition of Kumaran Asan's spiritual father of Sri Nayana Guru. The Guru was in a hospital at Palghat with a severe attack of cholera. His condition was deteriorating every day. In front of the hospital there were a number of flowering trees. The courtyard was hence always littered with withered fake flowers. The sight of these fallen flowers and the failing health of the Guru must have suggested to the poet's mind the parallelism in the life of both.
8. cf. the Original Text at the end, No. 60.
9. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No. 61.
the flower that glided so soon into the grave. The conventional
use of the flower as a symbol for the fair sex makes it easy
for the reader to see Asen's flower, both as a flower and
as a human being.

Thomas Gray in his 'Ode on the Death of a Favourite
Cat' similarly uses a symbol to project a human theme.
Based on a popular Aesopian fable, he uses an episode in
the life of a cat in order to vivify a type of human nature
and to draw a moral from a particular type of its behaviour.
A cat is seen besides a tub admiring her own image reflected
on water, reminding one of the morbid self-admiration of
Narcissus. Then she presumptuously desires the golden fish
in the tub which were in fact 'the genii of the stream'.
The greedy cat bends over the tub to reach the fish, falls
head long and meets with an untimely death. Towards the end
the poem gives up the cat fable and brings in the theme of
the woman, particularly her cupidity.

What female heart can gold despise
What cat's averse to fish

In the last stanza the poet gives a series of moral lessons
meant for women - that women can never retrieve a false step
so on.

10. Who saw his misk image reflected in a fountain and became
enamoured of it, thinking it to be the nymph of the place.
His fruitless attempts to approach this beautiful object
drove him to despair and death.
The Immortality Ode and Veena Poovu:

Of glory he comes from, would give him the sight of the
"immortal sea". But in them this self-delusion passes
away. The poet admits his loss and finds a rich compensa-
dition for it, the lesson of the poem that brings the
philosophic insight. Thus the spiritual struggle of the
poet finds in a verse note of reflection. The last line of
the poem, which is an example of the poet'sedsensation
into such a depth of grief that with Wordsworth he too
might have felt that -

This celebrated ode of Wordsworth is a veritable
threnody over spiritual death. The poem opens with the deep

The typical pastoral tradition is a poet lamenting the
death of a fellow poet. This tradition has been well-
satisfied in Assam's elegy Pratadasam (A Profound Lament).

But in Veena Poovu, the theme is not a private sorrow or
a personal grief. It deals with generalised emotions of the
communal and spiritual kind. It gives expression to the
emotions of a disguised lament, under the control of
highly imaginative reflections. Therefore, it is right to
consider it as an ode, especially because of its close
similarity in treatment with the greatest of the English
odes, The Immortality Ode.

To me the nearest image that might give

The interaction of love of nature and love of man,
each reinforcing the other, has always been a theme of
of glory he comes from' would give him the sight of the
'immortal sea'. But in the end this self-delusion passes
away. The poet admits his loss and finds a rich compen-
sation by virtue. Indeed, back to the love of nature. This inter-
pretation for it, 'the lesson of the years that bring the
philosophic mind'. Thus the spiritual struggle of the
poet ends in a quiet note of reflection. The last lines
of the poem which are an example of the poetic touchstone,
bring out the deeper and the holier meanings of the poem in
a gentle cadence.

Wordsworth's mind sinks, at his loss, through pain
to a level of thought deeper than tears could fathom. At
the composition of Veena Poovu Asan's mind also penetrated
into such depths of grief that with Wordsworth he too
must have felt that —

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Just like the Immortality Ode, Veena Poovu is also not
a mere expression of a passing mood but an unfor-
gettable record of a profound melancholy, provoked by the illness
of his spiritual father Sri Narayana Guru.

The interaction of love of nature and love of man,
each reinforcing the other has always been a theme of
Wordsworth's poems. In the *Prelude*, the love of nature leads to the love of man and in the *Immortality Ode*, the love of man, enriched by the association of human sympathy leads back to the love of nature. This interaction is seen in the ode, *Veena Poovu* also. The poem begins with the poet's grief for the tragedy of the flower and ends in a lament on the tragedy of life in general and particularly of man.

> What can tears bring in a world  
> Where the doom awaits all alike.  
> The life alas! is an empty dream.  

Again in Wordsworth's Ode the visionary splendour of the senses in childhood, the presumption of pre-existence and childish trances of idealism are all 'intimations' of immortality to Wordsworth. Asan's reference to the reappearance of the fallen flower as an eternal bloom on the Kalpaka tree in heaven, the belief that the element will last and the body will go and the recollection of the religion of the Upanishads are similar intimations of immortality.

To conclude, the two famous elegiac odes in the two languages are typically romantic compositions, because they grew not from outside according to a pre-determined scheme,

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11. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.62.
but from inside organically.

(3) *Nishkepadatheyodu* (Ode to Innocence):

This is a fine poetic representation of the moral law in its relation to the poet's spirit, to the spirit of man in general as well as in its relation to the physical world. This ode by Kumaran Asan, also reveals his ability to think about abstractions and intellectual conceptions in pictorial terms.

Some of the best odes of Collins are written on abstract themes such as simplicity, pity and fear. His feelings are most intense when he contemplates abstractions. In his *Odes to Simplicity*, the poet gives subtle definition to an aesthetic ideal by means of description. In order to create an area within which to describe his imagination he creates a goddess and endows her with a series of mythological attributes. As he creates by describing, his definition is slowly bodied forth. When he says of simplicity that 'she first on mountain wild........mused the powers of song' - he is both portraying his goddess and suggesting that simplicity in art was to be found in primitive times and not now. The technique Asan adopts in this ode is also similar. He conceives of 'innocence' as a deity...
distress. She is sad that it is not Love that rules the
world but dark forces of evil. The poet consoles the
deity saying that it has been the way of the world all along
and in the conflict Love shall ultimately win. Life with-
out innocence is meaningless. Innocence, (identified with
a goddess), alone can establish the proper moral order of
the world. The poet, therefore invokes her blessings. When
the poet describes the deity as beautiful as a flower it is
in fact the abstract quality innocence that is in the poet's
mind. And the effect of the following picture is also the
same.

As is fragrance to a flower sweet
Or a beam of light on a lamp in eve
So you shine in my mind's shrine
And darkness shall then flee in fear.

Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty* is a poem of similar ethical
import. It embodies Wordsworth's conception of the nature
of man in his highest endowment. The power that upholds
human world as well as that holds the stars in their course
is a power that makes for righteousness and Wordsworth
values it as a realist. The sight of the happy bird only
describes this power as 'Duty' and addresses it as the 'stern
remind him of the dark forces of this world, like greed
dughter of the voice of God'.

12. Translation. cf. The Original Text at the end, No.63.
Emerson finely says "the great poets are judged by
the frame of mind they induce". On this standard the
greatness of the writers of Nishkapadathayodha and the Ode
to Duty is beyond question.

In Ode to a Pigeon, Vallathol Narayana Menon desires
to escape from the weariness of the world and to a more
fanciful world on the wings of poetry. Hence after
a short while to his former world. The life full of
rainbow hue that appears on the courtyard of the poet’s
house stirs in him a wave of thoughts. A contrasting picture
of the happiness of the bird’s life and the unhappiness of
the human lot is the substance of the Ode. The poet envies
the bird for its unalloyed joy and prays it to stay awhile
so that he shares its delight:

O! my little lovely ripple
On a stream of rarer beauty
O! my dove, a rainbow darling
Leave me not in bitter sorrow.

Vallathol is a realist. The sight of the happy bird only
reminds him of the dark forces of this world, like greed
and pride, hatred and jealousy. In the company of the merry
bird he hopes to forget temporarily the sorrows of the world.

13. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.64.
However he does not entertain like Keats any wish to escape into the happy abode of the bird.

In *Ode to a Nightingale*, Keats expresses his desire to escape from the weariness and fret of this world into the bird's realm where bliss reigns for ever. The poet who flies to that world on the wings of poetry, returns after a short while to his former wretched self and hears life groaning round him again. The poem is an illustration of man's inability to correlate finally the ideal and the actual aspects of existence.

No other poet of the Age has made such a wide and effective use of the *ode* as K. Sankara Kurup. He is particularly fond of it. He writes: "Among the lyrics, it is the *Ode* that I like most; though it does not have the melody of a song. The *Ode* helps the poet to soar high on the wings of his poetic imagination". For 'O' it is a convenient vehicle for most of his personal expressions.

*Anthardham* (*Ode to a Silver Star*) and *Abhivadanam* (*Ode to Fate*) are two of his well-known *odes*. In the first he shares his thoughts with a silver star, a comrade of his youth. The star is a child of heaven and has a lustre that
fills all worlds and lasts for ever. The sight of the star, the poet hopes, will be a momentary consolation for him in his mournful life.

In ābbhīvedānā, a small blade of grass addresses Fate, in gratitude. Fate invited her to join the colourful pageant of animate and inanimate things that he leads. The humble grass participates in it and is astonished at the grand procession, seeing its magnitude and variety. She is also impressed by the unity that is seen amidst the diversity of the pageant. Man, the paragon of animals specially attracts her by his infinite faculties. And the grass is proud and pays homage to the human feet that tread on her on his march to progress. Sandhīva Tharam, Pushpa Geetham and Vandennam Parayukte are a few more of his well-known odes.

The Ode is a typical Renaissance creation. Malayalam poets have adopted it from English. During the New Age in Malayalam poetry, this form has been the vehicle of some of the finest poems in the language.

Today the elegy to be rather brief and intense, but in the past it was frequently quite long. English elegies then took the form of the pastoral elegy which is

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1. The word elegy is derived from gr. 'e o logos' which means to say elegantly.
2. THE ELEGY

In English poetry an elegy is now a poetic attempt to perpetuate and also to decorate the memory of a dear departed, involving real passion and intense personal sorrow. Gayley writes: "It is a reflective lyric suggested by the fact or fancy of death". It is also inspired by other sombre themes such as unrequited love, the fall of a famous city or the disappearance of a golden age. An elegy may be a pure lyric, when the grief of the man who writes it is fresh and green. But it is often partly lyric and partly a story, a discussion about life and death or a description of the dead man's character. A.R. Entwistle observes - "Sometimes Death is the inspiration and sole theme; at other times it is merely the common starting point from which poets have launched various themes, speculations on the nature of death and the hereafter, the consolation in which the tone shifts from grief to tributes to friends, the poet's own mood and even literary criticism".

Tends

Today the elegy to be rather brief and intense,
but in the past it was frequently quite long. English elegies then took the form of the pastoral elegy which is

1. The word elegy is derived from Gk. 'e e legiu' which means to say alas! alas!
governed by rather strict conventions. Milton's 'Lycidas' is a classical example of the type. The whole poem is developed with shepherds as the dramatis personae and is highly stylized. On the other hand modern elegiac poems are much more natural expressions of grief ranging from the sophisticated and symbolic tone of Whitman's When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd to the very unsophisticated and personal tone of G.M. Hopkins in Felix
Randal.

A conventional elegy begins with a statement of purpose and a formal invocation to the music. This is followed by an expression of grief at the loss of friend, and then a procession of mourners. At this point a digression is usually inserted. Then there is a passage in which flowers are brought to deck the hearse and finally there is the consolation in which the tone shifts from grief to peace and resignation.

Milton laments the degradation of poetry and religion in Lycidas, an Elegy on the death of a 'learned friend',

2. This is an elegy on President Lincoln.
3. An elegy on the death of Felix Randal, the ferrier.

Felix: There is probably a play on the Latin meaning of the name - happy, in spite of grief and death.
ordinarily an emotion gradually rises up to a pitch and then Edward King, whom he sincerely mourned. Tennyson philos-
oposes on the puzzles of life and destiny in In Memoriam, phismises in the line ends and all of the emotional outbursts may be reflected in the poem ellin an elegy on the death of his friend, Arthur Hallam; Matthew Arnold pauses to reflect on 'the course of life of mortal men on the earth' in Rugby Chapel, an elegiac poem on his visit to his father's grave, fifteen years after his death; and so on. These reflections are digressions in relation or acceptance of life. The Lycidas closes on a note of integral part of the entire structure.

Most of the English elegies have opening lines fit for initial impulsion:

fit for initial impulsion:

in order the play for the reconciliation to the event of Keats' death is gathered into a larger metaphysical affirmation,

'I weep for Adonais - for he is dead'

(Adonais)

'So live, he wakes, 'tis death is dead, not he.'

He lives, he wakes, 'tis death is dead, not he.

('Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill,' Of the primary English force into Manchuria, it is the soul that has succumbed most. It is also the

(Scholar Gipsy)

'Yet once more, O ye laurals, and once more'

(Lycidas)

(Yet once more, O ye laurals, and once more')

Once the occasion or the originating impulse is indicated, the poet devotes the main bulk of the poem to the expression of feelings, thoughts, reflections, memories fears and hopes that pass through him at the time. As
ordinarily an emotion gradually keys up to a pitch and then begins inevitably to relax; this rhythm in the rise and fall of the emotional upsurge may be reflected in the poem also. The conclusion of a lyric is necessarily on a lower key, more thought than emotion, a statement than an image it embodies, now that the emotion has worked itself out.

An elegy thus concludes invariably on a note of reconciliation or acceptance of life. The *Lycidas* closes on a note of optimism:

> Weep no more, woeful friends, weep no more
> For Lycidas, your sorrow is not dead.

In *Adonais* the plea for the reconciliation to the event of Keats' death is gathered into a larger metaphysical affirm-ation,

> He lives, he wakes — 't is Death is dead, not he.

Of the primary English forms introduced in Malayalam, it is the elegy that has succeeded most. It is also the grandest inheritance of the language from English. There are several simple as well as sophisticated elegies modelled after the English. The first elegy in the language is believed to be *Oru Vilapam* (1903) by C.S. Subramonyan Potti. In this poem Potti laments the death of his
daughter. It is reflective in nature, and begins with speculations of a philosophic nature on the uncertainties of human life. As he develops the theme he narrates how his long cherished ambition for a child was ultimately realised and how it was fondled and fostered. The child was to the father 'his heart and his heart's joy'. And this beloved daughter died of illness, leaving the father sad and forlorn. The poem ends with the consolation that the child must be happy in heaven. He prays for the eternal rest of the child's soul.

4. M. Rajaraja Varma, a great contemporary of Potti, published an elegy named Priya Vilapam (An elegy on the death of a Prince) the same year. Some historians hold the view that this is the first elegy inspired by 'In Memoriam'. The poet himself writes about his indebtedness:

I was greatly moved by the death of the young prince Aswathi Tirunal. For consolation I read Tennyson's 'In Memoriam'. I knew it would be an impossible task to compose an elegy in the language after that great English model. Yet I tried my best to imitate the form and technique of that great elegy. The result is the poem. Therefore it is neither an independent work, nor a translation. Those who expect in it the excellences of 'In Memoriam' will be terribly disappointed.

As a work of art this elegy does not have the simplicity of treatment seen in Potti's Oru Vilapam.
Potti was evidently influenced by Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' in writing his elegy on his child's death. Just as in that famous English elegy in this also the poet stores his grief and meditations in the hundred and odd stanzas, though on a miniature scale.

The practice of giving the title 'An elegy' to poems composed on the death of some dear one, definitely started with Potti and M. Rajaraja Varma in Malayalam poetry. This is a convention borrowed from English, imitating such titles as Lord Herbert Cherbury's 'An elegy over a Tomb', Thomas Gray's 'Elegy in a Country Church Yard' or Shelley's 'An Elegy on the Death of Keats - Adonais' etc. Potti set the style and many others followed the example.

V.C. Belakrishna Panicker has also contributed to this new venture. His first poem Oru Vilapam (1903) is an excellent elegy that echoes the conventions of the form while being distinct in its own right. It resembles in many respects the unconventional elegy of Thomas Gray. Oru Anuthapam (1913) is an elegy by Asan on the death of his mother. G. Sankara Kurup's lament on the death of Changampuzha is (Chitha Lekham) another fine elegy in the language. These are examples of the simple and sophisticated variety of the elegy. Nalappat Narayana Menon's
Kamal Neer Thulli is a long elegy which embraces more than
15 a hundred separate poems. This poem also owes its
indebtedness to In Memoriam. Asan's Prarodanam is yet
another attempt in the New Age to imitate the conventional
English elegy. A comparative study of some of these
famous elegies in Malayalam with corresponding English
elegy on the death of his wife caused by cholera. The models will show the extent of foreign influence.
post universalised all the theme though he starts from
the particular. The first six stanzas, descriptive of

(1) The Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard and Cru Vilapam:

A shrewd student of literature can see many points
of similarity between Thomas Gray and V.C. Balakrishna
Panicker. Both were poets of transition from the neo-
classic verse to the spontaneous poetry of the Romantic
school. Both were pioneers of new ages in literature, an
appreciation for the beauty of Nature and an interest in the
short 'annals of the poor' being their distinctive features.
A prevailing mood of melancholy is discernible in most of
their poems.

It is the death of a friend that plunged Thomas
Gray in mournful reflections, which finally took the shape
of the elegy written in the Country Churchyard. On
reading the poem we understand that the poet deals not
with the death of any particular individual but with death in general. The ultimate equality of rich and poor, the inevitability of death and the futility of greatness and littleness of human life form the central idea of the poem. The poet's effort here is to show that the poor rustic are not lacking in talents. The twelfth stanza of Oru Vilapam gives close actualized lines.

V.C. Balakrishna Panicker's Oru Vilapam is an elegy on the death of his wife caused by cholera. The poet universalizes the theme though he starts from the particular. The first six stanzas, descriptive of Nature, provide the necessary background for introducing the sad event. In Gray's elegy, the church yard with its humble graves and the evening gloom furnish the appropriate atmosphere. The sight of the rude graves of the rustics evokes in the poet a train of thoughts, on the life and death of the poor and the rich.

In Oru Vilapam the poet switches over to generalisations visibly from the 9th stanza onwards. The stanzas that follow bear close resemblance to certain stanzas in Gray's elegy in style and thought. The most beautiful stanza there deals with the idea that there is many a rich store laid up in the bowels of the earth, many a fair pearl in the bottom of the sea, that never was seen nor ever shall be.

\[\text{of. the Original Text at the end, No. 39.}\]
\[\text{of. the Original Text at the end, No. 40.}\]
Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear.
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

The poet’s effort here is to show that the poor rustics are not lacking in talents. The twelfth stanza of Oru Világam gives almost a verbatim translation of the above lines.

In another oft-quoted stanza in the elegy the poet says that the poor lead simple, but useful lives. It is wrong to look down upon them, simply because they are poor, for he warns, the inevitable hour of death awaits all people alike.

The boast of heraldry the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e’er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour:
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

The sixteenth and seventeenth stanzas of Oru Világam are deeply indebted to the stanzas quoted.

Had opportunity been granted in life to the poor rustics they would have bloomed into great poets like Milton or great statesmen like Cromwell. But as they were not

5. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.39.
6. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.40.
much after material fame and glory they lived simple lives -

Par from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

The heart that was once 'pregnant with celestial fire'
or that which would have 'waked to ecstasy the living lyre',
lay neglected in some half spot. These ideas bear great affinity to the eleventh stanza of Oru Vilapam.

The brooding philosopher Jacques of As You Like it considers man's life as consisting of seven stages.

All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players.

There is an echo of these lines in the fifteenth stanza of the poem.

Despite some of the English echoes cited above, Oru Vilapam is an original piece of composition. The parallelism only shows that Panicker had dived deep in English literature and absorbed its spirit, which had become a part of his poetic personality.

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7. cf. the Original Text at the end, No. 41.
2. Adonais and Prærodanæm:

The immortal elegy Adonais is the formalised lament of Shelley, the poet for Keats, the poet. This was part of his crusade against the damage done to Keats by the critical brutality in The Quarterly Review. It was rather less to do with the very real but remote grief that Shelley felt for Keats as a man. As in Milton's Lycidas the poet's concern is with the fate of poets in a world that resists their prophecies and a nature that seems indifferent to their destruction. It also gives a premonition of his weariness of the world at last and escaping to where Adonais was. The death of Lycidas led Milton up to the triumphant puritanism which was the highest spiritual force of his time. In Adonais Shelley emerges from his sorrow into a paen of immortality, the victory song of Love where Death is swallowed up in life.

Shelley's form is the pastoral elegy modelled on Bion's Lament for Adonais and Moschus' Lament for Bion. Bion laments the death of the vegetation god, Adonais, the doomed lover of Aphrodite. Moschus adopts the form of his friends' poem as appropriate for lamenting Bion's death and so Prærodanæm is an elegy in Melodies, modelled after Shelley's Adonais and Milton's Lycidas. The poet has

9. This was started in 1809 as a rival to the Edinburgh Review. Croker's article on Keats' Endymion was supposed to have hastened the poet's death in 1821.
begins the tradition of one poet associating the death of another poet with the fabled death of Adonais. Spenser's elegy for Sir Philip Sidney in *Astrophel* and Milton's for Edward King in *Lycidas* continue this tradition, which culminates in *Adonais*.

*Adonais* consists of fifty-five stanzas and falls into two principal movements, with the thirty-eighth stanza making the point of transition. In the first we have the invocation of Muse Urania, the procession of the Hopes, Dreams and Desires which Adonais had made lovely, the picture of the fellow-poets at the bier and a scathing attack at the 'herded wolves' who, he believed, have been responsible for the assassination of the poet. From stanza 39 of *Adonais* onwards Shelley is independent of his Greek models. And when we come to his magnificent peroration we feel that Shelley has given us the highest and the best he has to give. No man ever preached the triumph of the spiritual love over the material more eloquently than he. It is the under-tone of all his poetry and in *Adonais* it bursts forth into a mighty symphony.

*Prorodaram* is an elegy in Malayalam, modelled after Shelley's *Adonais* and Milton's *Lycidas*. The poet has
confessed this in the preface to the elegy. The poet mourns
Thus the poem is in the true elegiac tradition of one poet
lamenting the death of another poet.\textsuperscript{10}

Like Milton's\textit{Lycidas} or Shelley's\textit{Adonais}, \textit{Prarodenam}
is only a formalised lament. The feeling that inspired
Kumaran Asan is one of respect and devotion for A.R. Rajaraja
Varma's scholarship than of love and affection. The grief
expressed in the poem is not stirred under similar intimate
personal circumstances as that prompted the author of \textit{Kenu
Neer Thulli}. This does not mean that the grief expressed in
the poem is not sincere. The fact is that Asan is, concerned
here more with the school of thought that A.R. Rajaraja
Varma represented and the destiny of Malayalam literature
after him. Therefore like Shelley, Asan too mourns here the
\textit{Kokka} loss of a friend in spirit and genius\textsuperscript{11} rather than an

\textsuperscript{10} Moschus laments the death of Bion (in \textit{Epitaph on Bion})
Spenser that of Sir Philip Sidney (in \textit{Astrophel})
Milton of Edward King (in \textit{Lycidas}) and Shelley of Keats (in
\textit{Adonais}) and so on.

\textsuperscript{11} The great critic W.C. Douglas says: "The subject of an elegy
must be himself a scholar and a poet; he must have died an
untimely death and the elegy must be intended as a tri-
buté of admiration and respect rather than a lyrical cry of
grief". How well this definition applies to Asan’s
\textit{Prarodenam}.
intimate personal friend.

Prerodanam consists of one hundred and forty seven stanzas in a Sanskrit metre. It falls into two principal movements, with the hundred and twenty fifth stanza marking the point of transition. In the first movement, after the true pastoral vein we come across the invocation to Nature and to the Muses (Goddess Saraswathi), the procession of the mourners, the pathetic fallacy of Nature sympathising with the poet in his grief, a grateful remembrance of the invaluable services rendered by the friend, a digression on the sin committed by the critics and a call upon Nature to honour the memory of the departed great one by showering on him in golden largesse her treasures. The last twenty two stanzas are much finer than what precede them. Aasan casts off his poems machinery here and chants an astonishing hymn ending in a transvaluation of death. The three main trends of thought in all great elegies, namely expression of regret, admiration, and consolation, are faithfully faithfully followed in this elegy.

The start of an elegy should be exceptionally pathetic and touching such as may be able to stir a thrill in the hearts of listeners. The beginning of Prerodanam fulfills this requirement. At the very start Aasan invokes the spirit
of Mother Earth to weep for her departed son. She is the
chief mourner in the poem as Urania is in Adonais.

Weep, thou Mother Earth, weep 12

In Adonais Shelley invokes the spirit of mother
Nature;

Oh, weep for Adonais — he is dead
Wake melancholy Mother, wake and weep.

Malabar, Trichinopoly and Cochin, the three deities
representing the three different parts of Kerala lead the
procession of mourners. They pay their last homage to the
dead genius. All objects of Nature both animate and inanimate
share the grief. The house in which he lived, the College
where he taught, the trees whose shade offered him a
shelter for his meditations, all now put in a sad and
swollen look. Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, also joins
accompanied by eminent ancient Sanskrit poets
the procession. She is like Bhasa and Kalidasa and
Malayalam poets like Kshuthachanan and Kunchan Nambiar. This
is in line with the Adonais tradition of introducing
poets as mourners. There it begins with Byron, Thomas Moore
the digressions in Lyrical. In Adonais we have Shelley's

12. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.43.

13. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.43.
and Leigh Hunt and ends with Shelley himself. As in Lycidas and Adonais here also the mourners are allegorical and therefore more vital to the thought of the poem. Is what the poet wants to say in his own person, he says through the lips of his mourners.

Then noteless plot in a remembered name.

Nor does Asan fail to pay a glowing tribute to the services of A.R. Rajaraja Varma to contemporary literature:

... those 'carrion kites' in a few lines. Just like Shelley, Asan is in full flight of those lines themselves each word of the fifty-three of Prasadana shows that Asan believed that instead of having a monopoly in eternity it was as important to have a monopoly in eternity.

In Lycidas the poet is content with a single line of praise for Edward King for reasons well known. Shelley strikes a note of infinitude never heard in Lycidas. The fame of Adonais 'shall be an echo and light unto Eternity'. Keats is the 'young and dearest' in lineage that includes Homer, Dante and Milton.

The passage on 'fame' and on the hireling clergy are the digressions in Lycidas. In Adonais we have Shelley's

13. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.44.
fierce curses upon the cruel critics who killed Keats and his reflections on the mystery of life and death. Harsh criticism had crushed Keats. The Quarterly Reviewer is castigated in stanza 57 of Adonais thus - Thou noteless blot in a remembered name.

A. R. Rajaraja Varma too had to face similar merciless and unprincipled critics in his life. Asan attacks those 'carrion kites' in a few lines. Just like Shelley, Asan is involved here in a view of the tragic fate of poets in a callously world. A close study of stanza fifty-three of Praudana shows that Asan believed that hatred of genius by mediocrity is a tragic phenomenon in society. These lines, therefore, form a digression in the true elegiac tradition in English.

The greatness of Praudana lies not only in the splendour and dignity of its language but also in the sublimity of the poet's concluding reflections on life and death. About the majestic concluding stanzas of Adonais Symonds writes - "No where has Shelley expressed his

14. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.45.
philosophy of man's relation to the universe with more sublimity and with a more imperial command of language. How true it is in the case of Asan with respect to Faedoanam, after enunciating diverse religious views on life and death he comes to the conclusion that death is a blessing in disguise. Lovers and heroes defy it. It brings eternal rest. is felt in Asan's philosophical reflections in the poem. Throughout Faedoanam, there is the same theme. Similarly, Shelley chooses the fate of Keats for himself in a stanza that is justly celebrated. He says that life is like a dome that stains the white radiance of eternity. Death smashes the dome and tramples it into fragments that are brightly coloured. Yet he turns from them and seeks the glory of death they transfuse.

Now let us judge his poetic qualities we must remember that Tis Adonais calls: oh, hasten thither. No more let life divide what death can join together. A dead brother-poet, it is the poet's bid for the laurel-wreath for himself. It is therefore sound to be a highly considered piece of art, for a select and critical audience — a product of genius.

Now see what Asan has to say on Death:

Death, no doubt enhances the charm of life
The day proves a terrible torture without the night.

The dominant philosophical note of Faedoanam is the attainment of peace after the earthly life though death.


15. Translation by K.M. George. cf. Original Text at the end, No. 46.
The poet also hints at the mystery of death. However, it is
the home to which all men return. Death delivers the
spirit which then enjoys eternal peace. This is akin to
Shelley's proclamation of the immortality of the soul
when he says that Adonis is absorbed into the spirit
of the universal power of Love and Beauty. A certain
lack of coherence is felt in Asen's philosophical reflections
in the poem. Throughout Prerodnam, there is the same
'thunderous haze and dazzling brilliance' that we meet in
Adonis.

Prerodnam is undoubtedly the best Malayalam poem
in the true elegiac tradition of Adonis and Lycidas.
Inspite of its borrowings it is a highly original poem.
When we judge its poetic qualities we must remember that
'the pastoral elegy is not only a poetic wreath woven for
a dead brother-poet, it is the poet's bid for the laurel-
wreath for himself.' It is therefore bound to be a highly
conscious piece of art, for a select and critical audience -
a product of literary ambition.

W. C. Douglas. The
16. Frank Kermode, English Pastoral Elegies in English. P.T.

17. The Compiler of The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics (1861).
In Memoriam and Kannu Neer Thulli:

Apart from the poet's personal grief. In Memoriam embodies his philosophy upon the subject of life and death. Every object that the poet sees in nature reminds him of Hallam, who was also associated with Tennyson's sister Emily. This friendship grew in intimacy and in mutual admiration for more than four years. Then in the year 1833 Hallam suddenly died by a stroke of apoplexy. This sad event was a terrible blow to Tennyson and soon he developed a view of the emptiness of life. The result was the monumental elegy In Memoriam which was first published in the year 1850.

In Memoriam consists of a series of elegies and reflective monologues. According to Palgrave, the poem is an elegiac treasury in which Tennyson has stored the grief and meditation of 17 years. In action the poem covers a period of 7 years. It 131 sections, shorter and longer ones, with seasons and anniversaries recurring in between. In form they are closely like the fourteen-lined sonnets and the language and style are alike in their purity and perfection. The language of the elegy is the natural language of a grief-stricken man and not the conventional language of a grief-stricken shepherd. It most plainly shows the human nature to keep the wounds green for such a long time after the loss of a dear friend. It also exemplifies an analytical study of human miseries.

person was lost.

Apart from the poet's personal grief, In Memoriam embodies his philosophy upon the subject of life and death. Every object that the poet sees in Nature reminds him of his own loss and consequently his personal grief takes the shape of universal grief reflecting upon the miserable and transitory existence of man. The poem being with grief and ends with joy; between them runs the course of gradual transition from the one to the other. The way of death of his beloved wife Madhavi came to childhood. The soul we find to be a journey from the stupor and confusion of grief through a growing acquiescence in pain, to an almost unclouded peace and joy. "The poet," says H.M. Percival in his introduction to In Memoriam, "broods, moans, weeps, wails, doubts, despair, checks at hope, clings fast to it and in the end gets to an almost unclouded peace and joy." The elegiac philosophic elements thus run side by side throughout the poem.

Though there is depth of personal grief in the poem, like In Memoriam, it is also a philosophical monologue. A period of nearly seventeen years was covered in the construction of this philosophical monologue. It is beyond human nature to keep the wounds green for such a long time and poignant feelings that came in later life. In either way we find that the poem is not chiefly a lament for a dead friend. It also embodies an analytical study of human miseries.

H.M. Percival In Memoriam Introduction p. IX
As the poem progresses, the mourner gives the place to the artist, and the artist is then at work to fulfill his poetic mission. *In Memoriam* is therefore an expression of Tennyson's personal grief as well as a fine achievement of his poetic art.

Malappattu Narayana Menon's *Kanni Neer Thulli* (Tear Drops) is a major landmark in the history of elegiac poetry in Malayalam. He composed this elegy at the premature death of his beloved wife Madhavi Amma in childbirth.

The tragedy happened after a short spell of only eleven months of married life. The tears that rolled down the cheeks of the poet at the thought of the dear departed have been embalmed in immortal poetry. An analytical study will show that this elegy has been modelled after Tennyson's *In Memoriam*.

Though there is depth of personal grief in the poem, *Kanni Neer Thulli*, like *In Memoriam*, it is also a philosophical monologue. Neither was composed out of the spontaneous thoughts soon after death; they are expressions of continual and poignant feelings that came in later life. In either

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poem the memorial purpose as well as the speculative purpose, works on each other right from the beginning.

The mourner in *Kennu Neer Thulli* gives pathetic expression to his grief, fully resounding the agony and extent and despair and ensuing finally into resignation is present in his grief, fully sorrow of his wounded heart, a belief that they (the poet and late departed wife) will become an immortal couple. So do we find Tennyson present subject of life, death and fate. Thus even at the opening the poet is seen resigning himself to God's destructive attitude reminding the reader of the following lines in *In Memoriam*.

That man may rise upon stepping stones Of their dead selves to higher things.

Just like Tennyson the poet of *Kennu Neer Thulli* forces his way through the slough of despond and describes the indifference of nature to his sorrow. It is almost a similar apathy in Nature that Tennyson describes in the lines below.

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20. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.47.

21. *In Memoriam,* Section I, Stanze I.


23. cf. Original Text at the end, No.48.
And all the phantom, Nature, stands
with all the music in her tone,
A hollow echo of my own
A hollow form with empty hands.

The poet's mind then passes through the caverns of
doubt and despair and emerges finally into resignation in
a belief that they (the poet and the departed wife)
will become an immortal couple. So do we find Tennyson
passing from doubts and thoughts of death, towards peace
and hopes of renewed life.

In another stanza in *In Memoriam* the poet finds the
relating:

The mourner then digresses into a reflection on his
ey early childhood, adolescent life and the marriage with the
playmate of his childhood. The poet here immortalises love
in one of the finest stanzas of the *elegy* - Love that can
vanquish even Death:

The early morn untouched by lingering darkness,
The sweet melody that flows without a break,
The cool breeze visible to the eye,
The divine poem unencumbered by letters.

Tennyson's mind too travels back along the pathway
of life to the happy years of friendship and love. Love

23. cf. the Original Text at the end, No. 49.

24. Translation quoted from A Survey of Malayalam Literature,
K.M. George. cf. the Original Text at the end, No. 50.
haves the burden of his life as he 'plods his weary way'
and realises that love cannot die. Even if it is destined
to die he thinks;

'T is better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.'

so also to the author of Kannu Neer Thulli the sweet smile
that dawns on the face of his beloved wife has the power
to make a 'Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven'.

In another stanza in In Memoriam the poet finds the
relation between himself and his friend in the next world
reflected in that of a husband and wife separated intelle-
tually but ever united in love.

Her faith is fixed and cannot move,
She darkly feels him great and wise,
She dwells on him with faithful eyes,
Another 'I cannot understand; I love!' 27.

lies in the use of scientific and evolutionary images.

In both elegies we see the enigmas of life and death, pleasure
and pain occupying the minds of the poets. They also
express their faith in the immortality of the soul;

25. In Memoriam, Section 27, Stanza, 4.
26. cf. the Original Text at the end, No. 51.
27. In Memoriam, Section 97; Stanza, 9.
Thou wilt not leave us in the dust; Thou madest man, he knows not why, He thinks he was not made to die; And thou hast made him; thou art just." 28

Compare this with the twelfth stanza of section five in Kannu Neer Thulli. In the fight against death Malappat is led to the highest pitch of despair. Death is very powerful and destructive forces are always at work annihilating life in this world. He finds contentment in the triumph of immortal love over time, sorrow and death. The world which in the beginning of his sad reflections appeared to the poet a mere echo of his sorrow—later became the abode of that immortal love at once divine and human. This transposition of mood from despair to acceptance and hope is identical to both elegies.

Another aspect of similarity between the two elegies lies in the use of scientific and evolutionary images. In his quasi-philosophical poem Tennyson caught not only the mind of his time but even anticipated the future.

See how the Victorian Laureate uses images derived from science


29. cf. the Original Text at the end, No. 52.
and technology of the 19th Century. The process of steel
balance. The four lines are fitted into each stanza in
manufacture in a beautiful image:
both elegies in singular harmony.

That life is not idle as ore,
But iron dug from central gloom
And heated hot with burning fears
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom
To shape and use. 30

see a similar scientific image, where the poet describes the
freaks of fate in the second stanza 31 of section ten of
Kannu Neer Thulli. Stanzas like this where some fundamental
laws of science are endowed with remarkable poetic
beauty and charm are common to both elegies.


31. cf. the Original Text at the end, No53.
(1) It is fourteen lines long (2) Usually the balance. The four lines are fitted into each stanza in sonnets is divided into two parts - the quatrains (the first eight lines) and the 'sestet' (the concluding six lines) although the two parts sometimes run together. But these is no division in make. --- intimacy. The remark about In Memoriam that "it is poetry and poetry alone that keeps and will keep the poem alive; the poetry that fills it with such life-blood that we cannot bring ourselves to think that it will ever die" is eminently applicable to the celebrated Malayalam elegy Kavan Meen Thullli elsc.

3. THE SONNET

The Sonnet is one of the shortest but most formal of lyric types. It originally developed in Italy and is believed to be the outgrowth of the medieval 'Courtly Song'. It was brought to England in the early sixteenth Century and has been employed ever since by poets who desired to express in dignified form a single idea or emotion. It has four rhymed chief characteristics.

1. 'Sonnets' is the diminutive of 'Sonno' (Italian) which means 'little sound'. Francis Petrarach especially made the sonnet a popular medium for love poetry in his sonnet sequence Laura and gave it a form which has come to bear his name - the Petarchan Sonnet.
The petrarchan sonnet did not have much effect and

(1) It is fourteen lines long (2) Usually the
so the English man discovered a new form — different in
sonnet is divided into two parts — the 'Octave' (the first
eight lines) and the 'sestet' (the concluding six lines)
although the two parts sometimes run together. But there
is no deviation in the length of the sonnet; it is always
effectively fourteen lines.

(3) It is rhymed in a definite manner. The rhyme
scheme changes in different types of sonnet, but there are
never any lines let unrhymed. This makes for a closely
knit accumulation. (4) Its brevity compels the poet to
concentrate his material, and fuse his image into one
general design. The idea or emotion must be direct
and single. Thus the sonnet is not complicated with
secondary ideas and digressions, like the Ode. The first
English sonnets appeared in the year 1557 in the posthumous
edition of the poems of the Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt
and they were petrarchan in form. The form captivated
the Renaissance after its introduction and later attracted
the great poets like Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton.
'London 1802' by Wordsworth is good example of this form of
sonnet.

Milton! thou should’st be living at this hour;
England hath of thee.
The petrarchan sonnet did not have good effect and so the English men hammered out a new form—different in some details—it is usually known as the Shakespearean, or the 'English' sonnet. Although Shakespeare didn't invent it, he so perfected the English adaptation of the sonnet; that it came to be known after his name. It is the simplest of all sonnet forms. Many of Shakespeare's concluding couplets are complete poems in themselves. For example:

2. A good petrarchan sonnet often rises smoothly to a climax at the end of the octave, and has a swift, tumultuous cadence in the sestet which has been compared with the breaking of a wave. The immediate subject may be developed in the octave and the application in the sestet. That is the first eight-lines present the theme, raise the issue doubt or query, the last six answer the query, resolve the problem, drive a home the point by abstract comment. Frequently the octave is subdivided into two quatrains and the sestet into two tercets. This is not always so, for in Milton's sonnet the petrarchan form may have an unbroken onset through the fourteen lines or may pack all its points and pathos into the final line.

3. Wordsworth, London 1802

"In his hand, the thing became a trumpet; hence

4. The shakespearean sonnet tends to arrange its ideas or matter in three parallel quatrains and to concentrate its force of feeling or meaning in the final couplet. an effect which may be felt to lack the subtlety of the of the Petrarchan arrangement but which is exactly right where there is a sudden deepening of tone at the end. Thus the closing couplet is an argument epigrammatic comment or summary. So, too, the diamond in such a way that only one luminous light was visible to us" or "he considered that the English sonnet should be like a revolving sphere, every portion becoming continuously visible, with no break in the continuity of thought or expression anywhere apparent"—Mr. William Sharp - *The Sonnet*,

7. Wordsworth, *Sonnets and the Sonnet*
The English sonnet had always remained petrarchan in substance, an exercise upon the theme of love, usually of hopeless or unsuccessful love and the theme had fairly exhausted itself in sugared and artificial conceits. Then came the great poet Milton, a century after Shakespeare and reformed the English sonnet in substance as well as in structure. He found the petrarchan sonnet a heaven-sent instrument for expressing his deep excitement when the liberty of England was at stake, his deep anger when protestants were murdered in Piedmont, his resignation to his blindness and other such solemn feelings. He had to have a form full of massive dignity and in the petrarchan sonnet made of English words he had such a form.

"In his hand, the thing became a trumpet; whence he blew soul-animating strains". Throughout the Renaissance

9. Shakespeare, Sonnet No. XCIV.
6. A Miltonic sonnet is a modification of the petrarchan form. It sweeps from opening to close without a break; it glows "as if he had cut his diamond in such a way that only one luminous light was visible to us" or "he considered that the English sonnet should be like a revolving sphere, every portion becoming continuously visible, with no break in the continuity of thought or expression anywhere apparent" - Mr. William Sharp - The Sonnet.

7. Wordsworth, Scorn not the Sonnet.
uttered by Shakespeare and Rossetti, or sympathy with
the sonnet was essentially a love poem. But Milton enlarged
its scope by using it for political and moral criticism and
its song, but still indeed would he be of soul who
could pass by such a sonnet as 'The World is too much with
us.' To find beautiful and pathetic language set to
And when, after a slumber of 150 years the sonnet
woke again in England, it awoke with Milton's seal on its
brow. One afternoon in 1801, his sister read to Wordsworth
sonnets of Milton. He was then struck by their dignified
simplicity and harmony—so different from the petrarchan,

The 20th century too, stimulated by war, has found
swell so different from the Shakespeare's fine sonnets.
not used for the sonnet by bringing an exquisitely
"I took fire and produced the first three sonnets" writes
accomplished technique to the expression of traditional
Wordsworth. He used the sonnet form to express the feelings
themes and at least the name of Rupert Brooke is not
caused in him by the overthrow of kingdoms by Napoleon, by
the sight of tyranny and by the danger to England's freedom.

He found Milton's variation of the petrarchan form best
suited to his purpose.

Though a foreign poetic form, the sonnet has immense
popularity among the versifiers in England. Within the
In the 19th Century sonnet flourished in the hands of
limits of sonnets line the poets have exercised great
such poets as Wordsworth, Keats, Elizabeth Barrett Browning,
freedom of treatment. The rhyme patterns seen in the
Bridges and Hopkins. Wordsworth's sonnets are easily the finest.
English verse is not seen in Malayalam. The theme of
"Only the initiated will listen to the arcana of love
the language demands a different rhyme pattern for it;

8. "When I consider how my light is spent,
the lyre could
ere half of my days in this dark world and wide".

On His Blindness.
uttered by Shakespeare and Rossetti, or sympathise with the languors of Keats or with the passionate doubts of Mrs. Browning. But dull indeed would be he of soul who could pass by such a sonnet as 'The World is too much with us'. To find beautiful and pathetic language set to harmonious numbers for the common impressions of meditative minds, is no small part of the poet's task," says Mr. John Morely.

The 20th Century too, stimulated by war, has found new uses for the sonnet by bringing an exquisitely accomplished technique to the expression of traditional themes and at least the name of Rupert Brooke is not likely to vanish from its history.

Sonneting is something new in Malayalam poetry. Though a foreign poetic form, the sonnet has immense popularity among the versifiers in Kerala. Within the limits of fourteen lines the poets have exercised great freedom of treatment. The rhyme pattern seen in the English poems is not seen in Malayalam. The genius of the language demands a different rhyme pattern for it; which is adapted by its poets freely. They use the sonnet for any subject for which a short, concentrated lyric would
be appropriate. The original theme of unsatisfied or outworn love is not popular with them. But most sonnets are occasioned by a human context involving pain, as love or friendship broken by disunion or death, by a public emotion such as patriotism or love of liberty, by the impact of some splendour or mystery of nature, by individual moods of wonder or admiration of gratitude for the imperishable gift of art and the like.

G. Sankara Kurup, has the honour to be the first sonneteer (1931) in Malayalam poetry. He found the sonnet a lovely form to fit and hold lovely thoughts. He used it as a perfect vehicle for recording and analysing the emotional and intellectual processes accompanying his experience. Nearly all his good sonnets hold a nice balance between thought and feeling.

About the sonnet form G. Sankara Kurup writes:

How tiny is a dew drop! Yet it has a form of its own —
How wonderfully does it reflect the sunlight. And a sonnet is like a dewdrop." A better commentary is not required to establish the poet's love for this poetic form. An analysis of two of his well known sonnets, Koythukari (The Reaper) or Thoombakkeran (The Spademan) shows that his usual practice is to arrange the ideas in three parallel quatrains and to
concentrate its force of meaning in the final couplet. This is in imitation of the Shakespearean sonnet. The poet has admitted his special preference for this variation of the sonnet form. In both these the subject matter is the poet's longing for a 'good tomorrow' that will break through the barriers of the present day society such as custom, law and other selfish institutions. See how the poet, after developing the theme in the earlier stanzas, emphasises the main point in the final couplets.

Heizan (1931) is C. Aanzen Kuru's first attempt of the sonnet form. This is also the first sonnet sequence in the language. In this and in the Koythukari, the poet has put up a bold and brilliant challenge to the sonnet sequence as a series, called sonnet sequence, around a single theme. To publish the same examples of sonnet sequence are the spademans provided he throws away with his spade the barriers put up by conventions.

If a mighty limbed spademan comes
I offer him a song of praise. 10.

The subject matter of Koythukari has a resemblance to the theme of Wordsworth's The Solitary Reaper. In the Solitary

9. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.56.
10. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No.57.
Reaper the poet refers to a reaper in the distant past while in Sankara Kurup's poem what the reaper will do in future is the poet's concern. However the thought behind these poems is very simple, perfectly fitted to the sonnet form. The emotion aroused is common to all men. But see how brilliantly has the poet blended the thought and feeling by his imagination and skilful craftsmanship!

Saisavan (1931) is G. Sankara Kurup's first attempt of the sonnet form. This is also the first sonnet sequence in the language. In this and in the Sevare Geetham the poet has followed the Petrarchan tradition of linking sonnets in a series, called sonnet sequence, around a single theme. In English the famous examples of sonnet sequence are Astrophel and Stella by Philip Sidney, Amoretti by Edmund Spenser and Sonnets from the Portuguese by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, but the most famous of all is Shakespeare's.

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11. Astrophel and Stella is the series of sonnets in which Sir Philip Sidney, as commonly thought, expressed his love for Penelope Devereux daughter of the first Earl of Essex, and Sidney's disappointment and passion are supposed to have found voice in these poems.

12. Amoretti - a series of eighty sonnets by Spenser, which have been thought to illustrate the course of his wooing of Elizabeth Boyle the lady whom he married.

13. A series of sonnet by E. B. Browning published in 1850 inspired by passionate devotion to her husband.
which he directed partly to a mysterious 'dark lady' and partly to a male friend. In all of them love is the common subject. But in Sankara Kurup's Saisavam and Sagarageetham, childhood and ocean are the respective themes. In Saisavam there is an echo of the thoughts seen in Wordsworth's Ode on the Intimation of Immortality and Sagarageetham is said to have an affinity in idea with a Bengali poem Sagar San-geeth by Chitharanjan Das. In the four sonnets dealing with childhood the poet pictures beautifully (1) the glory and blessedness of childhood. (2) the advent of youth and knowledge that extinguish the splendour of infancy. (3) The longing for child's language that throws open an ideal world of joy. (4) The final wish to attain the child's Heaven in preference to the earth, 'the prison house' of the grownup man.

The poet portrays in Sagarageetham the mighty ocean with its inscrutable music in its convulsive, tranquil, amatory and dark-heaving moods. In convulsion the ocean is wild and tempestuous, in tranquility, calm and musical, in its amoebousness sweet and passionate and in the dark heaving mood, it nurses tempest in its brooding depths.

Whatever be the parallelism in theme, these sonnets are undoubtedly pure lyrics in feeling and their treatment evidently romantic. They are unsurpassed and unrivalled
so far in Malayalam poetry in the sustained elevation and power and in their marvellous impressions of ease in writing.

The small sonnet-sequence (of two sonnets) *Kansekkol* (The Golden Key) is inspired by patriotic zeal. It lacks in lyrical touch. In the other sonnets, the poet has used a wide range of themes such as love of art, death and poverty.

The two Idappalli poets - Raghavan Pillai and Changampuzha Krishna Pillai - have also used this new poetic form. The dominant tone of their sonnets is a sense of despondency arising from thoughts of death or pangs of unrequited love. *Maranam* (Death) from Raghavan Pillai's poetic collections, *Thushara Maran* (The Garland of Dewdrop) is a fine lyric. In the octave the poet develops the image of death as a stream that flows by a beautiful green hill. In the sestet he applies the image to make the statement that man is afraid to take a plunge in that immortal stream, despite his disgust with the grief-stricken life.

Sardar K.M. Panicker's *Sanchya Ragam* (1944) (*The Eben Song*) is another remarkable sonnet sequence in the New Age poetry. It consists of a series of 12 sonnets. It is perhaps...
the only one sequence in the true sonnet tradition initiated by Petrarch when he made a serenade of sonnets around his love for Laura. There is a remarkable coincidence in the theme of ideal love celebrated in the sonnet sequence of the Italian masters and the theme of *sandalya ragam*. K. M. Panicker has built his poem round 'Ideal love' - not the merely selfish forms which is based on self-sacrifice. The poet glorifies this form of love through a final couplet in one of the sonnets in *sandalya Ragam*.

Love that makes the world so bright  
Can better build a heaven unique.14

He says that there is only one way that leads to this Tower of love - and that is a narrow rickety flight of stairs. Along it one's mind may waver and feet falter and the tedium of the journey might frighten the traveller to abandon the quest as unattainable. But he who 'seeks, strives and never yields' shall ultimately reach it and shall be blessed for ever.

This is a poem of profound feeling couched in dignified language. In his miscellaneous sonnets the poet has used such themes as man, nature, politics and society.

14. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No. 58.
They reveal his versatility in the choice of subject as well as in his literary profession. Some of the best sonnets in the language have come from his facile pen.

As a sonneteer M.P. Appan has a prominent place. His sonnet collection Velli Nakshathram (The Silver Star) is the first of its kind. This was published in 1938. K.M. Panicker's Sandhya Deepam which also is a collection of sonnets saw the light of day only in 1944.

With Appan, the sonnet entered upon a new phase in Malayalam poetry. It is so because the sonnets he composed have a distinct stamp of originality in them, in breaking away from the traditional channels in subjects such as hopeless or unsuccessful love or childhood. He never wrote for fashion's sake or in a response to any other impulse other than the desire of the poet to express his personal ideas and emotions. The comment at the first edition of Velli Nakshathram that 'he is striking a new line among Malayalam poets' is well-merited as is evident from the following study of some of his well-known sonnets.

Prakruthiyum Kaviyum (Nature and the Poet) is one of his beautiful sonnets. It is indeed a lovely thought.
in a lovely poem. The theme is the immortality of creative art (poetry). In an Art versus Nature competition, art evidently emerges triumphant. This is the idea that is developed in the sonnet. Nature made a sweet flower out of earth and the poet marveled and wondered at its beauty. Then he gave shape to another out of his own imagination. Both were fair flowers that pleased a thousand eyes. As time passed on, the clutches of fate fell on both alike, snatching away the first and leaving the second unscathed. The poet hails the offspring of his own imagination, that stood the test of time as a mursling of immortality in the concluding couplet of the sonnet.

It shone like a star brighter ever on sky
Born of poet’s mind, the lovely bloom of light.15

Kurisil (On the Cross) is another fine sonnet. It breathes the spirit of compassion and kindness as embodied in the crucified Lord. Valuthum Cheruthum (The Big and the Small) illustrates the necessity of unity amidst diversity. The moon and the stars, the lively eye and the sturdy limb, the noble flower and the mean blade of grass have all their due place in the vast scheme of life. Small beauties we see in Valli Nesachanam are among the choicest and the best in life have their just place, to make life perfect in their short measures.

15. Translation. cf. the Original Text at the end, No. 59.
Other sonnets in Velli Nakshathram exhibit a striking variety of theme and style. Art and music, love and friendship, are all dealt with in them. Different moods of Nature, and individual moods of hope and optimism, wonder and worship also could be seen in his sonnets. Occasional flashes of patriotic sentiments, outbursts at social inequalities are also there. Whatever they be, it is an unchallengable fact that his subjects, images and feelings are entirely his own.

The poet appears to be attracted by the beauty of the Petrarchan form of the sonnet, though there are here and there some sonnets of the Shakespearean form as well. His practice in most of the sonnets is to introduce the mood in the first quatrains of the major system of eight lines and after a slight pause to enforce it further. The second quatrains develops it. Then after a deep pause the minor system of six lines opens and the first section of it takes up the thought and applies it, revealing a deeper suggestiveness and the concluding lines sum up the whole matter in a general reflection. The sonnet Anandam (Happiness) is a good illustration of this form. The sonnets in Velli Nakshathram are among the choicest and the best in our literature. By these alone his name will ever be indelibly engraved in the history of Malayalam poetry.
Some other notable poets who have successfully handled this poetic form are Nalapat Balasani Aama, Vennikkulam Gopalakurup and Vyloppilli Sreedhara Menon. Kuruvikal is an collection of sonnets by Vyloppilli. This poetic form continues to be exploited by many poets even today.

The sonnet form has often been attacked. For John Donne, "He is a fool which cannot make one sonnet, and he is and which makes two."

The sonnet though brief, is much greater than a lyric and demands greater concentration of poetry and the maintenance of an unbroken artistic elevation. The language of the sonnet is seldom quite simple, straightforward and sensuous. It is slightly involved and subject to inversion. It is one of the few forms of poetry where abstract and intellectual language is often more expressive than pictorial or sensuous, though the help of imagery is welcomed in brief metaphors and vital words.

There is no room mix in the sonnet for elaborate description which is doubtless the reason why the scenery and the natural reflection aroused by landscape, play so small a part in the sonnet compared with their importance in other forms of poetry. But the spiritual aspect of a scene, rather its picturesque qualities, may sometimes inspire a fine sonnet, as for example Wordsworth's "Westminster Bridge -"

in Wordsworth, "Here not the Scene,
Earth has not anything to show more fair,"
than London city with its quiet and peaceful look in the morning as against the commercial life in its midday smoke and noise.

The sonnet form has often been attacked. For John Donne "He is a fool which cannot make one sonnet, and he is mad which makes two". E.A. Robinson says, "Oh, for a poet ............. to put these little sonnet men to flight!". But then hear Wordsworth, one of its powerful exponents; "Scorn not the sonnet; critic, you have frowned, mindless of its just honours; with this key Shakespeare unlocked his heart ...............". However in Malayalam poetry the sonneteering rage continues unabated.

P. Sankaran Nair has a unique place. He was an eminent Professor of English. It was he who formally introduced the three English poetic forms, the ode, the sonnet and the dramatic monologue to the Malayalam people in his book Prasthana Thrayam. Though these forms had been attempted

earlier by some of the poets, it must be gratefully remembered that Nambiar's work, with its preface, served as a guide to the aspiring young poets to familiarise themselves with the essential features of these foreign patterns, such as subject matter, form and technique. The poet has also provided specimen translations in it, besides a few independent compositions. The main translations are those of Shelley's Ode to the West Wind, Wordsworth's Westminster Bridge and Browning's Addrea Ma del Sarto.

In the case of sonnets separate examples for the Italian and Shakespearean types have also been provided. The book, it can be said with certainty, served its purpose because in many poets after Nambiar took the cue from him and utilised the opportunity to graft well these alien plants in our soil. We cannot forget to note that it was by translating and imitating Petrarch's works that Wyatt gave the first English sonnets.