CHAPTER - 4

STYLO-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POEMS
Stylo-linguistic Analysis of Selected Poems

While selecting poems for this chapter the following criteria has been kept in mind:

We have left out longer poems because of the paucity of space and secondly because we wanted the students to visualize the poem as a unified piece. Here poems like elegy or longer odes or other narrative poems have not been taken up otherwise a reading of the whole poem could not be given by the teacher concerned at one go.

A variety of poems have been taken up to avoid monotony and increase students' interest. Apart from this, poems from different periods and movements of poetry from Milton in the 17th century to Moderns (Yeats, Bridges) have been included.

Presentation of the poem may not necessarily be in the chronological order of their composition but it will be starting with shorter poems and moving on to medium sized poems.

For convenience of reference the actual poem has been printed in the main body of the dissertation.
THE SOLITARY REAPER

BEHOLD her, single in the filed
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chant
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no'one tell me what she sings?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Familiar matter of today?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again!

Whate're the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;
I listen'd, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.
1. **Reading aloud:**

The teacher should start by reading the poem loudly. With the help of the students, the various steps along which the poetic event progresses can be described i.e. the first step is the poet's visit to some Highlands which have not been localised or given any geographical identity. It shows that the poet is not interested in the scenic details of the background. The second stage is identifying an activity, which the poet watches from a distance-taking place in some lonely field. It should be clear to the students that the poet is interested in the activity of singing rather than that of reaping.

1(a) **Title:**

During the loud reading, the teacher should first emphasise 'coherence' i.e., the relation between the title and the opening lines of the poem. Here, the use of the definite article "the" suggests the loneliness of the romantic "man" and the word "solitary" heightens it. Wordsworth's idea of loneliness can also be seen in 'The Daffodils' where he starts by: "I wondered lonely as a cloud"
The entire line not only depicts the loneliness but also the rootlessness of the Romantic period.

1(b) Theme:

The ‘theme’ of the poem is how a simple situation, ‘a familiar matter’ can be a source of wonder and excitement.

The comparison between the impact created by the song of the human girl in the context of the immediate present with recalling the impact of the Nightingale and the cuckoo in the legendary past is a pointer to the poet’s instinctively being drawn to the melancholy strain of the Highland girl.

The impact of the song logically makes the poet curious to comprehend the thematic content of the song. It is futile to make enquiries about the nature of the song because like a piece of profound poetic composition the song has a lot of scope for interpretation. Hence the question with which the third stanza begins is immediately dismissed, and relegated to the rank of a rhetorical enquiry, implying only wonder. One thing is certain that the song is “plaintive”, narrating some sad past events of historical or legendary nature. It
may relate to "some familiar matter of today" or "some natural sorrow loss or pain" to which humans are destined. The two bits of the possible theme of the song are in a linguistically significant manner introduced by the syntactic device of using two rhetorical sentences in lines 17 and 21

"Will no one tell me what she sings"

and

"Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of today?"

In the last stanza the casual effect made at deciphering the song in the third stanza is brushed aside cryptically, signalled by clausal phrase "Whatever the theme".

This brushing aside enables the poet to resume his narrative more freely, which was temporarily obstructed by the curiosity about the nature of the theme of the song. The conclusion of the poem can be reached only by the poet's listening to the song motionless and still as if his corporal faculties were suspended (c.f. Wordsworth's own Theory of Poetic Imagination). This stillness may be extremely short-lived but it has been permanently implanted in the
storehouse of experiences to be recalled later in some tranquil moment of contemplation.

1(c) Silent Reading:

The students will now read the poem silently, on their own and understand the literal meaning. They will, by now, have understood that this is a simple, narrative poem, describing, perhaps, a single event in the poet's experience.

2. Paraphrase:

The first stanza does not give any clue whether it is the poet who is the traveller or any other persona accompanied with someone whose identity is entirely vague. The poem begins with a dramatic element 'Behold her'. The listener is attracted by a sad song being sung by a girl who is cutting and grinding the grains all alone. The thinks that the echo can be heard in the entire valley.

The second stanza can be ignored for the time being on the premise that nothing would be lost in the meaning of the poem which is concerned with giving an account of the situation and of the effect of a girl's song upon the traveller. But it draws a comparison between the singing girl and the
singing birds like the nightingale and the cuckoo, and thinks that the former sings more beautifully.

The third stanza, by the use of the single personal pronoun 'me' indicates that the traveller is no other person than the poet himself. This stanza makes the poet pause and decipher the theme of the song of the girl. He is unable to do so. Then, because of the sad tune, he thinks she might be singing about some unhappy incident of her life or about the death of a near one or about some contemporary issue.

In the last stanza the query about theme being unnecessary, the effect of the song upon the poet occupies the central core of the experience undergone by the poet. Now the second stanza that was ignored earlier will be given a significant status. The effect of the song was not an ordinary one, of an ephemeral nature but had gone into the storehouse of sensations and perceptions in his poetic mind. At this stage the teacher can give a brief hint at Wordsworth's concept of the poetic mind which stores striking experiences in the form of sensations and perceptions. Later these are recreated into poetic visions when the faculty of imagination is put into operation. The
girl's song has not only effected him at the normal auditory level but has been implanted into his heart. Hence the uninhabited praise showered on the beauty of the singing birds' songs in the second stanza becomes highly relevant.

3. Syntactic Pattern / Cohesion:

The very first syntactic pattern introduces a dramatic element through its use of the command sentence- "Behold her". This is repeated twice in the fourth line in "stop here" or "gently pass". The use of the exclamation "Oh listen!" adds the element of surprise and wonder besides reinforcing the addressee – addressee presence to reinforce the dramatic structure with which the poem begins. The addressee obviously is the traveller who, we know is the poet himself as the poem progresses. But the addressee is undefined and like the "You" of the first line of Eliot's "Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock" turns out to be other persona.

In the second stanza, the syntactic pattern employing the emphatic auxiliary "did" (line 9) and using "was" (line 13) between the adverbial "never" and the full verb "heard" (line 13) collaborate with the free flowing narrative and the images of the "tired groups of travellers" in "some shady
haunt among “Arabian Sand” and the thrilling voice of the
cuckoo bird” breaking the silence of the seas among the
farthest Hebrides” to underscore the poets high praise of the
“melancholy strain” of the “Solitary Highland lass.” The
impact of the soothing effect of the song of Nightingale and
the joyous impact of the song of the cuckoo bird on the
surrounding or a tribute to the two singing birds create the
effect of immediacy as well as endow them with the attribute
of timelessness. The timeless dimension is brought in by the
Hebrides being associated with several fairy and heroic tales
extolling the beauty of the song birds.

4. Images:

The poet is not interested in the biographical details of
the rustic girl because during the progression of the poetic
theme the girl acquires the status of an image, a memorable
experience to be retained forever and a vision of joy. This is
why it is the details about the song, its “plaintive note”, its
concern being human and its effect being soothing and
healing—which are permanently organised into a poetic
composition.
5. Statement of Observation:

In this poem we can see how a simple situation or an actual occurrence can shape a new vision. It is in a sense throwing light on a familiar object, a light that was never on sea or land so we can say that there is strangeness added to beauty in this most simple poetic narrative. This poem contains almost all the features of Romanticism like awe, wonder, excitement, familiar experience and therefore it deserves to be called a poem rich in romantic content.

The linguistic markers are not foregrounded in a way that we can call them significant devices. But shapely easy flowing narrative with ordinarily encountered words, along with a colloquial rhythm are the linguistic features of a poem which make it eminently rhythmic.

6. Questions for comprehension:

The suggested questions for feedback are given below:

Q.1 Which is the linguistic marker that indicates that the poet also is a solitary traveller?

Q.2 Do you think the poem was composed at a different time and locale than those of the actual observation?
Q.3 In the first stanza the words "behold", "yon", "lass", "strain", "vale" can be said to be poetic words not used in the routine interpersonal interactions. Prepare a list of such words occurring in the remaining three stanzas.

Q.4 Is there an element of unexpectedness in the whole narrative? How is this element exploited in creating a unique experience in the mind of the poet?

Q.5 What difference will it make if the definite article 'The' in the title of the poem is replaced by the indefinite article 'A'?
THE NIGHTINGALES

BEAUTIFUL must be the mountains whence ye come,
And bright in the fruitful valleys the streams, where—
Ye learn your song: [from Where are those starry woods? O might I wander there,
Among the flowers, which in that heavenly air
Bloom the year long!

Nay, barren are those mountains and spent the streams:
Our song is the voice of desire, that haunts our dreams,
A throe of the heart,
Whose pining visions dim, forbidden hopes profound,
No dying cadence nor long sigh can sound,
For all our art.

Alone, aloud in the raptured ear of men
We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and then,
As night is withdrawn [of May,
From these sweet-springing meads and bursting boughs
Dream, while the innumerable choir of day
Welcome the dawn.
1. Reading aloud:

The teaching will begin with loud reading of the poem in the class. While doing so, he/she will talk about the title (in detail), theme, (just hint at it, should be discussed in detail later), and the extra-textual information (in detail)

1(a) Title:

The students will at once notice the presence of 'coherence' i.e., title is related to the opening lines of the poem and has the plural form of the noun. This will immediately give rise to various questions in their minds e.g. Does it mean a group of song birds, all the song birds, or a species distinguished from other species. While the teacher is reading it will become absolutely clear that the poem is divided into two parts and is dramatic in structural form.

1(b) Theme:

After the loud reading and discussion about the title will emerge the theme — why has the poet chosen the 'nightingales' as the subject, why not the eagle, the sparrow or some other bird? The theme lies in the answer: because he wants to convey that deep suffering is purifying and
contributes to the birth of beauty and perfection. The reference to suffering will allow the teacher to give some extra textual information.

The first six lines comprise a question which has an element of wonder as well as an implied assumption. The speaker asking the question expresses his longing to be from where the Nightingales sing. The bird's reply to the question in the first stanza,

"............. and then,

As night is withdrawn",

is the story of suffering and pain, told in the second and third stanza. The birds dream of sufferings is followed by the "choir of the day", to welcome the dawn. The "barren mountains" and "spent streams" of the second stanza as background of the sad song is paradoxically replaced by "sweet springing meads and bursting boughs of May." This second paradox in the third stanza is a pointer to the fact the poet is more interested in shaping the Nightingales' song into an image rather than describing its impact upon his ears. The third stanza, thus presents the poetic statement of
the image the poet has been struggling throughout the text to create and establish.

That deep suffering is purificatory and contributes to the birth of beauty and perfection has been touched upon by T.S. Eliot in his *The Wasteland* where the pouring forth of the melancholy note by the song bird is not comprehended by the materialistic mind of the modern man. But pain and sorrow do not necessarily imply negation of happiness and desire rather than fulfillment is of a greater value so far as attainment of beauty is concerned. This beauty is not of the world of decay and mutability but belongs to the world of permanence and of static perfection. In the last line of the first stanza the poet's longing is not to wander among the flowers of the natural world but among those which breathe of "heavenly air" and "bloom the year long"- meaning other worldliness and permanence.

The second line of the second part gives as it were a definition of the concept of profound poetic themes, which can have a stirring effect upon the reader. The points mentioned are the frustration of desires, pining for profound
forbidden hopes which goes straight into the heart and press for expression.

The teacher should emphasise that though the poem is patently dramatic the locale and the occasion of the question and answer are deliberately left vague. This alerts the careful reader of the poem to the problem of the poetic intentions and tenor. The identity of the addresser is not immediately known inspite of the use of the first person personal pronoun, 'I'. The speaker of the poem may be the poet himself who is eager to assert his conviction about the source of poetic inspiration. The second part starts with the birds' answer which is an emphatic 'Nay' and very few words have been used about the surrounding of nature. The two adjectives 'barren' and 'spent' are considered sufficient to dismiss the possible poetic notion that the external surrounding can be a viable source of profound feelings which can be incorporated in the song.

1(c) Extra textual information:

It will be profitable to tell the students the story of the pre-natal sufferings of the Nightingale. This will also contribute to the explication of the concepts of beauty
brightness and purity of the poetic product which is a consequence of the purifying effect of suffering.

The teacher can tell the students briefly the story about how Philomela was raped by her sister's (Procne's) husband (Tereus). Lest Philomela should narrate to her sister the brutal outrage of her modesty by Tereus, the latter cuts out her tongue and hands. Philomela manages to weave into a tapestry her story and sends it to her sister. Procne being infuriated at the beastly behaviour of her husband plans a revenge upon her husband in which she kills her own son and serves his flesh as food to her husband. The story thus narrated would have remained of historical importance only had its end not been presented in the form of Philomela being transformed into a Nightingale, Procne into a swallow and Tereus into a hawk as Tereus draws his sword to kill his wife and her sister.

1(d) Silent Reading:

Once the poem has been read aloud, the students will now read it silently so as to absorb the literal meaning and find answers to the questions arisen in their minds while the teacher read the poem.
While reading the poem silently many questions may come to the minds of the students about the phrases like "voice of desire", "haunts our dreams", "dark nocturnal secret" which will be explained by the teacher (as extratextual information) while talking about the images and allusions.

The students will naturally imitate the teacher's pronunciation, stress and intonation etc.

2. **Paraphrase:**

The poem begins with the poet's admiration of the place from where the nightingales come. He thinks that the mountains must be beautiful, the valleys bright and fruitful. Probably that's the reason why the birds sing so beautifully. He also wants to go there, among the flowers which bloom throughout the year in the heavenly air.

The second stanza begins with the birds' answer: "Nay". The birds tell the poet that the mountains are "barren" and the streams "dry". They also tell the poet that their song is not a product of joy but of pain that haunts their dreams. It is the voice of unfulfilled desires.
The third stanza continues when the nightingales say that we sing aloud in the night telling the people about our secret of pain and suffering which has given birth to beauty and perfection. Then as night withdraws i.e. towards dawn, we dream about our hopes which could not be realised.

3. **Syntactic Pattern / Cohesion:**

The poem begins with a deliberate inversion of the normal order of words in a sentence. The pattern "The mountains, whence ye come, must be beautiful" is presented with the inverted form where the adjective followed by the main verb comes first. This is for obvious emphasis on the beauty of the mountains rather than the place itself (i.e. the mountains). The second line follows the same pattern though it is meant to be read in continuation of the first line and to be followed by the third line.

The second part starts with an emphatic "Nay" and very few words have been used about the surrounding of nature. The two adjectives "barren" and "spent" are considered sufficient to dismiss the poetic notion that the external surroundings can be a source of profound feelings which can be incorporated in the song.
The use of the term “throe” tries to remove the vagueness of the second stanza. This term has a metaphorical implication hinting at labour pain which has a blending of both pain and pleasure – pain at a physical plane of existence and pleasure at the bringing forth of new life into the world. The third stanza describes in a paradoxical manner the birds’ pouring out her secret meaning in the song which has an exalting effect on the hearer contrary to the expected response of depression at the painful nature of the song. Here the meaning seems to be complicated because of the paradox of pain being conducive to the production of a pleasurable response. The other complication which needs to be disentangled is the meaning of the phrase “dark nocturnal secret” It may have more than one meaning, it may mean that the bird is singing in a hidden place at the time of night and not in an open place to be seen by people. The objective “dark” reinforces the implication of “nocturnal.” It also hints at the possibility of the world not knowing the truth about how beauty and perfection are born out of struggle, suffering and pain as a result of hopelessness of desire and the ever haunting of dreams compelling in vain, materialization. The word “secret”
has the implication of the Greek mythical allusion the narration of which with its symbolic meaning will enrich the students' response.

4. Symbols and allusions:

The poetic expression has the ingredient of pain in order to be truly meaningful and capable of touching the deepest core of the hearer's heart. This can happen only if two conditions are fulfilled. One, the poet who conceives a poetic feeling should ensure that it is a product of an experienced past, and secondly, that it comes out spontaneously and not depends upon any artifice of expression. Here the allusions to the pre-natal experiences of the song bird naturally come to the mind. This allusion will be an extra-textual explanation of the various sufferings undergone by the song birds. However, the second stanza is of a general nature, containing well known maxim of the poetic process

(c.f. Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thoughts)
The "Nightingales" serve the purpose of a symbol to express the poetic idea i.e. beauty and perfection in art can be attained only through undergoing felt experiences of struggle, suffering and pain. Frustration, despair, pain, hopeless longing and endless struggle- all entailing pain and suffering – have the effect of transforming the dross into gold. This idea could not be presented into the form of statement. Hence the poet's choice of the dramatic mode brings out desired artistic symmetry of the poem. The idea is made to develop into a debate so that its symbolic conclusion is of a deeper significance.

5. Foregrounding:

The place from where the Nightingales come does not hold a great importance for the poet is indirectly hinted at in the syntactical pattern of the first line. To say what we have already said just now in other words, the idea of brightness and duty has been highlighted. These qualities are perhaps nurtured by the caring touch of nature, represented by the mountains, fruitful valleys, streams and the starry woods. The poet does not give any detail or explanation about how the birds learn their sound because of the beauty and
brightness of nature. He immediately declares his longing to be there without stating the reason— Will the beautiful surrounding of the mountains teach the poet also to learn his song, or else the poet wants to be there just out of curiosity? Or is he deficient in the art which the birds possess. The answer to this is left vague because the question and the assumptions are brusquely rejected in the very beginning of the second stanza.

6. Statement of Observation:

The poem is an attempt at presenting an idea. Had the poet done that alone in the form of a statement, the artistic merit of the poem would have been considerably undermined. But he redeems the poem from the banality of a prosaic statement by taking recourse to the use of symbolism and mythical allusions, the latter reinforcing the former.

7. Questions for comprehension:

Q.1 Is the poet's assumption in the first three lines valid? Does it sound convincing in the light of later development of the poem?
Q.2 Why doesn't the poet attribute divinity to the mountains and valleys and streams in the first part of the first stanza, as he does regarding his own longing to go to wander into the starry woods which are not subject to change and decay?

Q.3 Have the natural surroundings of the first two lines of the first stanza any significant connection with the first line of the second stanza?

Q.4 Is there any implied contrast between "decay" and "change" on one hand and 'permanent' and 'beauty' on the other?

Q.5 Identify the images drawn from nature in the first stanza and compare them with those in the last stanza.

Q.6 Prepare a list of syntactic and lexical Foregrounding in the poem and comment on how they contribute to the deeper meaning of the poem.

Q.7 What effect does the use of consonance in line 16 of the poem create?

Q.8 Comment on:
1. Fruitful valleys
2. Starry woods
3. Heavenly air
4. Barren mountains
5. Spent streams
6. A throe of the heart
7. Raptured ear
8. Dark nocturnal secret

Q.9 List the cases of inversions of the normal word order pattern in the poem and comment upon their importance.
ON HIS BLINDNESS

WHEN I consider how by light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent

To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My turn account, lest he returning chide;
'Doth God exact day-labour, light deny'd?'
I fondly ask; but Patience to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state

Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait.'
1. Reading aloud:

The teacher will, as usual, start with reading the poem loudly. While doing so, he/she should discuss certain things before analysing the poem, the most important being the title, theme and extra-textual information.

1(a) Title:

The title "On His Blindness" – is it apt? Is there 'coherence' i.e. is it related to the opening lines? These are the things which need to be considered while discussing the title. Here, it can be clearly seen that there is a link of the poem:

" .......... how my light is spent

Ere half my days in this dark world and wide"

The phrases "light is spent" and "dark world" in lines 1 and 2 respectively point to the fact that the poem is about blindness.

1(b) Theme:

In order to increase students participation in the interactive presentation of the poem we can ask them to list
the central thought and the allied ones in the first sight lines. The list may, through leading questions emerge to be something like the following:

1. The central thought is "to serve the Maker" by using the gift (poetic talent) God has endowed him with.

2. It is painful not to utilise the gift because of physical disability.

3. God may be angry if a person thus gifted, like the third servant in the Parable, does not utilise his talent.

4. The poet wonders whether God also can have expectation and criteria of judgement as the Master has in the Parable.

5. All the above feelings and ideas revolve around the background of the poet's blindness. Here the word 'fondly' is significant on which we will comment later.

1(c) Extra textual information:

Most of the poems exist in a "context of situation" without understanding which, the meaning of the literary piece remains vague.
In dealing with this poem the teacher can give some extra-textual information and tell the students that the poem is autobiographical in nature. Milton's blindness in his youth was a sad but real fact. The second allusion is the Parable of the Talents in 'The Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Mathew' (25:14-30) The central idea of the Parable is whether God expects all his creatures to serve his command even though one is disabled for no fault of his own, but because of the Creator's own design.

1(d) Form:

The next clue to the meaning results from the form of the poem. The poem is in the Sonnet form hence students need to be given the definition which will help them in looking for the core meaning of the poem. The dictionary meaning of the term 'sonnet' goes as: "a poem properly expressive of a single complete thought, idea or sentiment of 14 lines usually in iambic pentameter, with rhymes arranged according to one of certain definite schemes, being in the strict or Italian form divided into a major group of 8 lines (the octave) followed by a minor group of 6 lines, (the
sestet), and in a common English form into 3 quatrains followed by a couplet."

The form of the poem as well as the central message of the Parable both point to one significant fact that the poem does not have thematic complexity and that it deals with a single thought or feeling.

1(e) Silent Reading:

The biographical information given to the students will help them appreciate and comprehend most of the striking phrases in their silent reading viz. "light", "Ere half my day", "dark world and wide", "that one talent". Biographical and biblical allusions may also inspire them to raise certain questions which can be meaningfully resolved through a line by line analysis by the teacher in the later stages of the study of the poem.

2. Paraphrase:

The poet starts by saying that when he thinks how he lost his eyesight before half of the days of his life are over, the world appears to be dark and dismal. It seems to be
engulfed in despondency. He regrets that the talent given to him by God would remain unutilized upto the last breath.

He expresses his inclination to serve God by composing poems in His praise. He thinks it is his duty to describe God's qualities, lest God should be angry with him for not utilizing the talents given to him. But then he thinks if God would need his services as he has deprived him of his eye-sight. Immediately, he thinks it is a foolish question.

The poet then satisfies himself that God neither needs the performance of man's needs nor the use of his endowed talents. He thinks that those who submissively tolerate sufferings and hardships also serve God. Patience is the element most loved by God.

Finally the poet says that God's Kingdom is great and has thousands to serve Him. God commands all, some are active, but those who stand weekly also please God by their devotion by waiting on his pleasure.

3. **Syntactic Pattern / Cohesion:**

   The first eight lines constitute one complex sentence. It begins with an adverbial clause followed by other
subordinate clauses and clausal phases till we reach the eighth line to the Principal clause. In his eagerness for comprehension the poet has taken recourse to manipulating syntactic patterns which are at glaring deviance from the normal patterns used in speech or in simpler poems. Students might feel a bit uneasy with the winding syntactic movement of the first eight lines. But if we make them aware of the basic grammar of clause analysis where a complex sentence has a Principal clause and one or more subordinate clauses, they would certainly favourably respond to the suggestion of reading the first eight lines from the Principal Clause- “I fondly ask” —backwards.

The reading of the poem from “But Patience ............ without rest is more straight forward. The lines of what would traditionally be called sestet or in uncomplicated syntactic forms, consisting of declarative sentences with pauses, and inversion of clauses which are commonly encountered to make colloquial rhythm of the English language. Students will find no difficulty in grasping the literal meaning of the sestet. The real problem of interpretation lies with the first eight lines because of the linguistic complexity of the syntactic patterns.
4. Foregrounding:

The foregrounding at the grammatical and syntactical level can be located as follows:

1. The involved and convoluted syntactic pattern from "When l........l fondly ask" raises the question of the honesty of intra-textual poetic intention. We wonder whether the feelings expressed by the poet is sincere or merely a rhetorical device to draw a message contained in the last line. The possibility of God's 'chiding' the delinquent disabled creature is presented through a winding development of the various bits of the facts stated e.g. blindness, coming over the poet in the middle of his youth: the still fecund poetic talent struggling for an action; but a disability to use this talent. Keeping strictly to the intra-textual details of the contextual situation the rhetorical question, "fondly ask" sounds a false note. This response to the poem is borne out by the reply of Patience in the rest of the poem, because it has been conveyed in easily comprehensible sentence patterns creating a smooth narrative flow. The grammatical foregrounding is
observable in the contrasted syntactic patterns of the two halves of the poem. The significant point to note is that the suspected sincerity of the poetic thought in the first half of the poem is conveyed through a question — "Doth God....? — which can have relevance only in the light of the extra-textual fact of Milton's real blindness and cannot easily be connected by the other fact by the Parable mentioned earlier. The extra-textual blending of the thematic fibre in the present poem as an essential clue to the deeper meaning of the poem is a rebuff as it were to the New Critics who opposed consideration of such elements in the analysis of poem. Considered thus, the false note we talked about is changed to have been a deliberate poetic device for bringing dramatic depth to the poem. This is clear from the poetic confession that the poet's apprehension is ill founded, explicitly conveyed through the 'Foregrounding' of "fondly" which obviously means 'foolishly'.

2. The most significantly foregrounded lexical item is "Talent" which has a Genus faced richness of meaning (Genus faced because the word refers to the poetic
talent of the poet at the present time as well as alludes to the talents in the Biblical Parable). In both the cases the role of the Master, or God and His anger is relevant. The word "useless" gets connected with talent in the Parable and yields the meaning of inactivity, infertility and a static-growth-oriented situation.

3. The next lexical item is "murmur" which implies complaint ventilating some grievances. This grievances ridden state of the poet's mind is cleared of the fog of grudge when Patience is brought in to convince the poet of the true meaning of service to God in the Christian sense, i.e. "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Besides the grammatical Foregrounding pointed out above, the poem is simple in so far as the figurative use of language is concerned even the metaphors of "king" and "bearing of mild yoke" towards the end of the poem are uncomplicated figures.
5. **Statement of Observation:**

The poem is in fact a reversal of the meaning of the Parable where the erring servant, out of simple loyalty, is punished by the master. But if the story of the parable be expanded, the role of Patience would have been the same as it is in the case of the poet. The servant of the Parable would have learnt of the wider design of his master by simply waiting. Thus, the poem is both a development of and a reversal to, of the meaning of the Biblical Parable.


6. **Questions for comprehension:**

Q.1 What is meant by the one talent that is death to hide?

Q.2 Is the poem a development of, or a reversal of, the meaning of the Parable? Or both?

Q.3 Does Patience answer the question, or does Patience show that the question is badly framed?
Q.4 Is the poem sentimental?

Q.5 How important to you is the question of personal sincerity?

Q.6 Is the poem personally sincere?

Q.7 Does the poem make sense to you in its' own terms?
THE EXPRESS

After the first powerful plain manifesto
The black statement of pistons, without more fuss
But gliding like a queen, she leaves the station.
Without bowing and with restrained unconcern
She passes the houses which humbly crowd outside,
The gasworks and at last the heavy page
Of death, printed by gravestones in the cemetery.
Beyond the town there lies the open country
Where, gathering speed, she acquires mystery,
The luminous self-possession of ships on ocean.
It is now she begins to sing – at first quite low
Then loud, and at last with a jazzy madness –
The song of her whistle screaming at curves,
Of deafening tunnels, brakes, innumerable bolts.
And always light, aerial, underneath
Goes the elate metre of her wheels.
Steaming through metal landscape on her lines
She plunges new ears of wild happiness
Where speed throws up strange shapes, broad curves
And parallels clean like the steel of guns.
At last, further than Edinburgh or Rome,
Beyond the crest of the world, she reaches night
Where only a low streamline brightness
Of phosphorus on the tossing hills is white.
Ah, like a comet through flame she moves entranced
Wrapt in her music no bird song, no, nor bough
Breaking with honey buds, shall ever equal.
1. **Reading aloud:**

The loud reading of the poem will present no problem with skinning the cognitive meaning of the whole piece. Students will identify that it is a poem which passes through various places and goes to far off places.

1(a) **Title:**

The title should give a clue to the intended meaning at a connotative level. Questions like – Why the poet used a definite article and not an indefinite one? Why is the specific locale of the starting of the train not mentioned? Does the train then stand for an idea, image or a symbol for something? Does the poet give details about the statement of idea, its development and conclusion? Is the idea presented through any dialectic and debated? etc. – come to the mind for immediate attention. One thing is sure that the title does not relate to a particular inert object but is endowed with human attributes of movement and joy of song.

1(b) **Theme:**

The teacher will tell the students that the word “manifesto” is a prominent collocational violence and brings
in a jarring effect. Students will immediately recognise that "manifesto" belongs to a clearly familiar register of politics and is used for a particular political ideology, i.e. communism. Today, it is often used in a much looser sense meaning programme, projects, political promises and such fields of social upliftments related to the domain of politics. Whatever extended sense the term has acquired, the meaning that it relates to an idea, ideology or a socio-political value system comes to our mind immediately. Thus there is a strong connection or "coherence" between the title and the very opening line of the poem.

1(c) Context of Situation / Extra Textual Information:

The teacher may tell the students about two or three things regarding the context of situation in which the poem was born: the first thing, should be some details about Spender's own life, as a member of the Leftist group of poets headed by W.H. Auden who had profound sympathy for the miserable lot of the working class labour. His reaction to the Spanish Civil War and praise for the struggle of the working labour class against the exploiting capitalist class under the banner of Marxism and his pronounced sympathies
for the have-nots and the unemployed in the wake of the Great Depression during the thirties after World War I, will help the students to respond to the train as an embodiment of an ideology better.

1(d) Silent Reading:

The students' attention is now fixed on the fact that the poem is about the ideology of Communism. So, while reading the poem silently, the train will be depersonalised. They will envision the train in terms of a majestic human, a dignified woman. Normally we would use "it" for the train but the poet uses "she" and the movement is presented as a charming sight.

While reading the poem silently the students will try to find the connotative meanings of different linguistic items like "Manifesto", "black statements", "more fuss", "queen" which bring in explicit "Foregrounding"

2. Paraphrase:

The poem is a single long paragraph. If a person reads the poem without understanding the "context of situation" it would seem to be a simple poem written about a train. But
as extra-textual information has already been provided to the students, it is not relevant here to give all the details.

The poem begins when the train leaves the station but the words "statement" and "manifesto" seem to be out of place (this collocational violence has been discussed under the heading "syntactic patterns") the simile in line 3 "gliding like a queen" points to the grace of movement.

The attitude of the train "without bowing and with restrained unconcern" is very natural. Then the route -- houses, gasworks, church, cemetery, the open country -- has been described. All this seems to be very normal as these are the thinks a train usually passes through, but the reference may point to the fact that it is mostly concerned with the working class.

Once out of town, it increases its speed and the onlookers are stunned.

The train moves at a great speed and "begins to sing" i.e. it gives a whistle, at first low, then loud, and at last with a "Jazzy madness".
She whistles while passing through curves, tunnels and gives a brake, wherever necessary.

While going at a great speed the things outside seem to shine and change their shapes. She goes further than Edinburgh or Rome and wants to reach the peak of the world. At night it is shining so brightly as if it were a cornet.

The music that it creates is unparalleled it seems to be supernatural even nature (birds, bough) fails to produce such music.

3. **Syntactic Pattern / Cohesion:**

In the first three lines we find that there is a registral deviance in regard to images. "Manifesto" and "Statement" belong to the register of political discourse and the simile used in the third line,

"But gliding like a queen, she leaves the station."

belongs to the domain of royalty. Only two nouns i.e., "pistons" and "station" belong to the proper domain of the immediate subject, i.e. the train. "Fuss" belongs to the domain of colloquialism. This registral meaning achieves the goal of presenting the movement of the train with the dual
burden of the cognitive and connotative meanings in a vivid manner.

Line 4 onwards the syntactic pattern gets more complex with the addition of an adjectival clause in line 5.

"She passes the houses which humbly crowd outside,"

Line 6 and 7 are left without any verbal lexical item and the poet's intention is to elaborate his point of view by the visual images of the gas-works and a large cemetery which can be seen on the fringe of the metropolis out of which the train moves off. The gliding of the first vinyet progresses into passing with increasing speed denoted by the quick succession of the sight of houses, gasworks, and the cemetery. Besides the cognitive aspect of the meaning relating to the gradual picking up of the speed by the train, deeper meaning relating to the studying of the ideology is explicit. This ideological movement was formulated in the metropolis no doubt but is found in the sway outside the metropolis in the areas where labourers lived at the periphery of the town. The lexical items like "humbly", "gasworks" and the epitaphs on the tombs in the cemetery

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point to the fact that the people concerned here are the working class.

The third statement about the further speeding up of the train is described in lines 8–10. The train moves beyond the town into the open country with greater speed which creates a sort of agreeable fascination and mystery. The non-clausal part of the syntactic pattern in line 10 which is also not marked by any figurative marker such as we have in a simile shows that the description now is picking up to move into a deeper poetic domain by invoking a vivid visual image.

Lines 15 and 16 follows the same syntactic pattern as the other complete sentences from the beginning of the poem, i.e. the Principal Clause following the adjuncts. This has been done in order to emphasise the idea contained in the phrases constituting the adjunct. The train now moves to the rural landscape smoothly with a shrill scream as it were to bring a new awareness among the people. The last part of the gaining of speed creates “strange shapes”, creating mysterious noise and image of movement.
4. Foregrounding:

We have already mentioned the collocational deviance in "Manifesto". The "black statement of pistons" at the literal denotative level means the starting of the train. The term "statement" is obviously connected with "manifesto", though to accept its meaning in the immediate context of the poem as "being put into operation" will not be difficult. It may pass for an idiomatic statement of something like 'to translate thoughts into action where the infinitive simply means 'to activate'. In "without more fuss" the words "more" is significant which denotes that something has gone on before the actual starting of the train. In terms of the connotative meaning, this "more fuss" might refer to discussions, debates, protests, etc before giving a green signal to the train – i.e. Communism – to move out of the urban circle of intellectual deliberations to the hitherto untravelled territory of different types. The word "black" remains intriguing. At the literal plane it relates to the colour of the pistons but at a deeper level it may mean an attack upon the domination of Capitalism for which the movement of the train – start of a revolution– would mean, in a common idiomatic parlance, a black day, meaning in other words a
prophetic forecast on the future of the present of the present political system.

We encounter another Foregrounded word, "queen" which may be called a contextual violence by the choice of the linguistic item made by the poet. In the context of Communism the presence of a queen majestically and graciously moving is likely to disturb the pattern of thought which has just begun to take shape. But the term "gliding" while supporting the surprising the inclusion of queen, for her grace of movement may recall the image of the queen bee. The train's leaving the station comes as a linguistic capping over the other preparatory activities conveyed by the words "manifesto", "statement of the pistons", "gliding like a queen". The end position of the Principal Clause in the syntactic pattern of the first statement relates to the definitiveness of the movement of the idea. (c.f. the train).

The word "mystery" is pronouncedly Foregrounded and may yield a multilayered semantic dimension. It may mean that they did not quite understand what was happening around, especially in the context of its sudden outburst in Russia where the uneducated masses were not mentally fully
prepared to comprehend the implications of the grand revolution.

The train is endowed with more attributes of joy such as singing which begins at a low pitch, then goes into loudness and at last acquires a "jazzy madness." The cognitive aspect of the meaning is quite clear and students can easily grasp that it is the whistle of the train. But at the deeper level it may mean that the movement starting at a low key almost engulfed the whole of the human population with a sort of intoxication which kept them away from heeding to any other political ideology. The exclusiveness of jazz music at its highest pitch keeps the ears of the listeners shut off from any other noise.

5. Images:

The image of the "queen bee" has already established the fact the queen (the political ideology) has a wide following and no obstruction. As the train leaves the poetic envisioning of its movement in terms of the graceful woman with a sense of pride, commitment and determination recede into the other details, or we can say is defused over other territories of its spreading influence.
The vivid visual image, the "luminous self possession of ships on oceans" indicates the view of the interior of the train when the natural light of the day has ended. The image also reinforces the meaning already conveyed in the image of the queen with her "restrained unconcern" and "stately movement" (without bowing).

The last part of the gaining of speed creates "strange shapes", creating mysterious noise and image of movement. Up to this point the train has covered the territories adjoining the peripheral parts of the metropolis, and the wide lands of the rural habitation inside the country. Towards the concluding part of the poem the poet extends the boundary of influence of the ideology beyond the "crest of the world". The prophetic envisioning of the spread of the ideology is summed up in the reference to Edinburgh or Rome, where geographic specifically is not the poetic intention. The idea aimed at being communicated is the quick expansiveness of the political Movement across Europe where a large part of it had already come under the spell of the Revolution. The movement of the ideology is not so much directed to the urban territory as to the rural ones. It is represented by the image of the "stream-lined
brightness of Phosphorous" while the train crosses the
"tossing hills" in the sweep of the fast movement.

The visual image presented in lines 22-24 is a familiar
experience of any traveller by train. The fastness of the
train's speed is achieved by as it were, the felt experience
of the reader as a train traveller.

6. Lyrical Quality:

While the descriptive narrative reaches its cresendo
with the simple slow moving of the train, out of the station,
gaining speed gradually and finally acquiring a tremendous
high speed, the poet does not seem to be interested in
giving other details of the movement of the train. The
straightforward narrative ends in a stylistically significant
manner in a lyrical outburst of the poet when his own
fascination at the sight of the train breaks his narrative
restrain. The train now is seen as moving in a trance with
the shooting speed of a lighted comet.

Besides the visual realisation of the final movement of
the train where the train is connected with a cosmic power
(c.f. the comet), a highly poetic dimension of it's universality
is seen in its unparalleled music of the song which endows the train with supernatural attributes. The lyrical outburst as a conclusion of the poem raises it immediately from the level of its being merely a poem of ideas. It appears as if the poet has been carefully and systematically working up the response of the reader towards the poetic perception in a way that the reader and the poet become one integral part of the speeding movement of the train. In the final three lines the syntactic pattern, though unambiguous, gets more involved than the other statements in the poem which implies an ecstasy-like experience to describe which the verbal medium is accepted to be inadequate. Even nature fails in matching the effect of the train's song.

7. **Statement of Observation:**

The close analysis of the poem will show how the poet is fascinated by machine which was considered to be a solution to the economic depression that had engulfed the western hemisphere during the 1930's. However, more extratextual information will take the mind of the reader away from the linguistic organisation of the poetic content. The emotional involvement of the poet in the content is one of
uninhibited administration for an idea without the least tinge of his inclination been propagandist. The whole poem follows a repetitive syntactic pattern consisting of 8 clearly shaped sentences with words we commonly encounter in our daily life. The images are strictly confined to the visual and auditory domains. This structural and linguistic organisation of the poem indicate that the deeper profundity of any further poetic ideas needn’t be looked for.

8. Questions for comprehension:

Q.1 How is the title of the poem connected in a coherent manner with the opening of the poem?

Q.2 The details of the territories through which the train passes are very selective. What does it indicate?

Q.3 Do you see any contradiction or impropriety in using the image contained in “gliding like a queen”?

Q.4 List all visual and auditory images to show whether they are merely decorative or have a greater intratextual relevance. Do you think the concluding lyrical outburst is in character in regard to the development of the poetic thought or does it stand out as an after thought?
THE SECOND COMING

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast; its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?
1. **Reading aloud:**

The teacher will, as usual, read the poem loudly. The reading should be such that the students get a feel of the possible tenor and thematic concern of the poem. The very first line has four long drawn vowels, and hence the words are to be read out with proper gravity of the rhythmic movement to demonstrate that the poem is of a contemplative visionary nature and not a narrative with dramatic situations.

Here perhaps, through a brief digression the teacher can explain the meaning of the term gyre, which he will find is a familiar experience of people, through the mother tongue (if feasible). This will get the students ready to be involved in the movement of the poem.

1(a) **Title:**

Students can be given hints about the implication of the title. Here the use of the definite article making the event of "Coming" a 'second time', can be explained to the class through their interactive participation. The definite article, the students will agree, indicates that the second
coming has already taken place and hence the allusive or metaphorical pointer will be to the civilisation of Christianity. Here the teacher should withhold for some time further explanation of the biblical myth or 'Yeats' concept of history and civilization. This will help the students to concentrate on extra-textual rubric of the poem rather than be diverted to extraneous information.

1(b) Theme:

After the teacher's loud reading and their own silent reading students can be asked questions as to what the poem is about. They will surely come out with two answers

(i) The deterioration or disruption of a recurrent phenomenon which has resulted in a sorry state of affairs of a pervasive nature. The theme of recurrence or continuity can be easily drawn from the verbal pattern in the beginning of the poem where the image of gyration is created. Here the teacher can introduce to the students Yeats' concept of civilization as a conical gyre, preferably through a geometrical drawing, to explain his concept of civilization. The conical gyre will look something like this:
A - Quintessential point

B - Gyration indicating growth

C - Point of complete collapse

D - Start of a new civilization out of the debris of C.

Students can now perceive in the gyration of the growth of a new civilization the points where things have started falling apart and the centre cannot hold because this idea is embedded in the gyral concept of Yeats' notions of the birth, growth and death of a civilization. Students can easily identify the civilization as that of Christianity starting with the birth of Jesus Christ.

(ii) The second thing which promises to lift the gloom of the first part is the vision of a hope unambiguously conveyed through the words "revelation". Students can identify that the
"the widening gyre" which has been "turning and turning" is going to start afresh at the points of its complete collapse as shown in the geometrical figure. After this the teacher can point out how the superficial meaning of the Christian civilization completing its span of life is to be replaced by a civilization the shape of which is envisioned by the poet without any apparent logic. Thus the students can discover at the superficial level that the poem is structured in a way that the central theme starting with a systematic and logical exposition concludes with a purely subjective solution for which there is no intratextual or extra textual reasoning provided. The poem may, therefore, give an impression of a subjective approach to a major problem concerning the genesis, development and end of a major civilization in any particular culture. The poem bears a deep colouring of the poet's sense of the lack of hope for a positive future of the human race.

1(c) Context of Situation / Extra textual information:

The students should be goaded into responding to the validity of the poet's futurist vision in the context of the situation globally, where 'the rough beast' has increasingly
been destructive. This finds immediate reference to the struggle for independence in Ireland, which witnessed a lot of bloodshed and was a period of collapse of all values. The global scenario of blood dimmed panorama in which the virtuous or doomed is let loose all over the world during a period after the composition of the poem. This validation is well within the experiential range of the adults studying at the university levels.

1(d) Silent Reading:

The students will now read the poem silently, imitating the reading of the teacher. During the silent reading they will try to find answers to simple questions like: Into how many parts is the poem divided? Does the first part have any reference to the second coming? Is the second coming assured in the second part? Is "The second coming" an event, or is a return of values or what? Will the hope of the return or beginning of a new time bring any better conditions?
2. **Paraphrase:**

The poem begins with the image of falcon moving away from the falconer. The falcon (followers) can not hear the falconer (Church). The general condition is bad and things are getting out of control (of the Church). There is corruption and bloodshed everywhere and nobody can listen to the cries of the innocent. People have lost faith in everything good (including the Church) atmosphere of total despair and hopelessness pervades the society.

The second part begins with a version of hope and reassurance by the use of the words "surely", "revelation" and "at hand". It informs the readers about the second coming. But the vast image (of the second coming) that arises in the sands of the desert shapes the vision created in the first two lines. The image which has the head of a man and body of a lion has a blank gaze, as pitiless as the sun. It is seen moving, frightening away the desert birds. The coming of this awe-inspiring and terrifying image brings an end to the duration of the first coming. The new civilization, in its "rocking cradle" will be a "nightmarish" vision of a "rough beast" "slouching" towards Bethlehem to be born.
3. **Syntactic Pattern / Cohesion:**

That the poem is divided into two parts is clearly indicated by the graphological spacing. The students will became alert immediately at the repetition of the kinesthetic verbal form of "turn" denoting movement and progression invoking visual perception.

Special attention is to be paid to the middle pause in the third line where two sentences are used to give a picture of the situation which the poem is going to present.

In the 4\(^{th}\) and 5\(^{th}\) lines the reading should bring out the prominence of the hard consonants i.e. /d/ and the repetition of the verb "loosed".

"Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world
The blood dimmed tide is loosed and everywhere".

In the 6\(^{th}\), 7\(^{th}\) and 8\(^{th}\) lines the dominance is of soft consonants and short vowels—/s/, /l/, /ʃ/.

"The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity".

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The syntactic pattern of the third line i.e. the present indefinite denotes both the present and at the same time contains the idea of recurrence. This brings into a bold relief. The universality of the phenomenon of the history of a civilization is integrally connected with its immediate reference to the sorry state of affairs in Ireland in particular and the western hemisphere in general. The history of the Irish struggle of independence and the internecine war between the Republicans and the Free status immediately before Irene’s independence in 1923 was a period of the collapse of all values. From the lexical points of view two words – “things” and “hold” stand out prominently for introducing the meaningful element of ambiguity. Even in common parlance we refer to “things” for a general state of affairs which is inclusive of all facets of a particular situation (e.g. “things were really bad” meaning general application rather than any specificity). In the same way the word “hold” may mean the centre not being capable of holding the things which were falling apart or the centre nor being able to stand on its own even, depending upon the use of the verb “hold” either transitively or intransitively. In fact both the meanings are simultaneously present. The resultant
scenario is one of pervasive anarchy conveyed through the passive construction of the sentence pattern. This syntactic pattern is continued in the two lines which follow where we have the verbs "is loosed" and is "drowned". The repetition of "loosed" reinforces the irretrievable. In the last two lines of the first part we return again to the syntactic pattern of a statement in the present tense. This syntactic pattern of the declarative sentence and the present tense in the first part thus convey the state of affairs towards the close of the 20th century, the theoretically stipulated period of the span of life of the Christian civilization.

This also hints at the general pattern of the history of any great civilization.

The first two lines of the second part heavily depend upon the device of repetition and the use of straightforward syntactic pattern. Again, the consonants are the soft ones and vowels are short which combine together with the other consonantal and assonant features along with the repetition of "surely" and "at hand" are reassuring in the context of the note of despair hinted at in the first part of the poem. The
word "revelation" (vision of hope) is quickly revealed to be the second coming.

Even at the stage of loud reading, the students are bound to ruminate over the implications of the second coming, the 3rd line breaks at an exclamation which threatens to shake the vision just created in the first two lines.

4. Foregrounding:

Under Foregrounding we can ask the students to identify the linguistic items which stand out prominently from their phonological, grammatical and collocational points of views.

In the first part of the poem students can point out the use of long vowels being used as a pointer to the expanse of the dominion of the civilization under reference, i.e. Christianity. The ever-expanding gyration of the civilization encompassing the ever-increasing territorial expansion of its control and influence has been enforced by the visual image and symbolism of the falcon not heeding the instructions of the falconer. Here the falcon is not any ordinary bird but the
very symbol of Christianity which propels the gyration of the civilization and hence is known as gyro-falcon. The image of this falcon not “hearing the falconer” implies the loss of direction of Christianity, the institutionalised control of which, through the strong church has lost its mooring. There is a terrible ironical implication here about the sorry state of affairs of the value of Christian dispensation for the needy humanity. But this has not been explicitly conveyed through the linguistic aspects of the first two lines. This is why it is rightly said that the deeper meaning of the text lies sometimes beyond the language.

But here both the aesthetic and linguistic Foregrounding in the form of symbolism and imagery, as well as phonological and grammatical markers, collaborate to convey the meaning of a compulsive situation of helplessness—conveyed by the use of the modal “cannot” in retrieving the pristine strength and value system of Christianity. If that is the situation then the inevitable consequences are presented in the six lines which follows the initial image. The various images in which the situation is presented are conveyed in straightforward statements, in short, declarative sentences, denoting a sense of finality.
Certain significant figurative and symbolic Foregrounding is to be noticed in the images of “anarchy”, “tide”, “drowning” and “passionate intensity”. The tide is obliquely a pointer to the biblical deluge which is historically telescoped into the modern age with its conjunction with violence e.g., “blood dimmed” in the wave of unmindful violence, traditional value becomes merely ceremonious and looses all it's meaning and relevance (e.g. drowned).

"The ceremony of innocence is drowned"

There is no intellectual fibre left which can be said to be nourished by any strong conviction, while the petty humanity at the level of lower intellectuality is behaving like a mad man (e.g. the passionate intensity). Thus the literary and linguistic aspects of can help the students to grasp the meaning and the mood of the first part of the poem i.e. a total collapse of a great civilization, and a mood of resultant despair.

5. Images:

There seems to be a deliberate rhythmic pattern from the 1st to the 8th line, which encapsulates the narrative of
one image with implication of alarm, concern and anxiety to one of depression and hopelessness. This image has been created by the used of hard consonants /t/ and /d/, and phrases like "the falcon cannot hear the falconer", "things fall apart", "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world", "The blood dimmed tide is loosed", "The ceremony of innocence is drowned". The middle pause in the third line, "things fall apart"; "the centre cannot hold" gives a clear picture of the situation.

The second part of the poem describes the envisioned image of the new civilization. The shape of the new civilization is presented through a terrifying image of a shape with "Lion body and head of a man". The image has a blank and pitiless gaze as contrasted with the image of Christ (i.e. mercy, love, sympathy, compassion etc,) in the first coming, the duration of which is going to come to close. Students can easily be made to perceive the conclusion of the poem that "20 centuries" of Christian civilization has been a "stony sleep", meaning futility and indifference to the service of humanity. The new civilization in its "rocking cradle" will be a "nightmarish" vision of a "rough beast" "slouching" to be born.
The above explanation can immediately arouse in the minds of the students the question whether the new civilization which will be born out of the centric point of the debris of the old one will hold out any happier state of existence for mankind. Such a curiosity is logical because by now the students have enough understanding of Yeats' concept of civilization. This curiosity connects the two parts of the poem on the principle of coherence.

The absence of linguistic markers for coherence is strongly realised when we notice the poet's effort to lighten the weight of the mood of despair by emphatically holding out a hope of a new beginning, which is imminent. The repetition of the words "surely" and "at hand" reinforce the idea of the inevitable urgency of this new beginning. In the 3rd line the "second coming" is repeated with an exclamation mark. Exclamations usually convey the sense of surprise, reservation, excitement, skepticism, elation or mood of great satisfaction at achieving some long cherished goal or object etc. In the present context a mixed sense of skepticism and satisfaction seems to be the meaning. The sense of skepticism is evidenced in the image of the "revelation" appearing to be the one contrasted with that of the pristine
image of the preceding civilization. "The second coming" is going to be a terrifying phenomena. The innocent and delicate babe that Christ was, in his first cradle is replaced here by the "lion body and head of a man". Naturally the gaze of such a futuristic birth presents "blankness" and "pitilessness" like the desert sun providing no comfort to the "desert birds" which had hitherto been soothing themselves under the comforting shadows of the desert. The birds will naturally feel frightened and run away as the "shape" moves it's "thighs slowly". The image is not an ordinary one. It is "vast", coming out of the cosmic universe. When such an occurrence is envisioned to take place "The darkness drops again". Here the earlier mood of despair returns. It is joined by a sense of regret at the ineffectiveness, indifference and futility of the Christian civilization during its course of "20 centuries". Christianity failed to initiate a meaningful, constructive, worthwhile and humanistic new civilization. Hence the "rocking cradle" will be that of a "rough beast" which will be indifferent to the cause of humanity and fully devoid of love and sympathy. It will be both terrifying as well as strong.
6. **Choice:**

The most important factor in Foregrounding which is essential to both literary and linguistic criteria of analysis is choice—choice of lexical as well as grammatical components of the poem which are available within a system of the language. The most important criterion in this regard on the side of literary appreciation is the use of figurative and symbolic devices, which we have already talked about. The metaphorical and mythical use of the symbolism of falcon, and deluge in the first part and of the shape "with lion body and the head of a man", the pitiless and blank gaze of the "shape" frightening birds away," the rocking cradle" and allusion to Bethlehem in the second part are all within the system of the figurative exploitation of language in the larger sense. The element of surprise—an important aspect of Foregrounding can be seen in the emphatically asserted hope in the beginning of the second part which is followed soon by its terrifying frustration developed to the point of the vision of Bethlehem with a nightmarish rocking cradle. In the same way we can point out to the choice made at the lexical or the grammatical levels—pointed out earlier during
the analysis of the poem which collaborate and even validate the aesthetic response of the reader.

Thus the poem can be presented in the class-room with the teachers trying to assure himself/herself whether the poem has gone home to the student as a whole, by devising a list of comprehension questions.

7. **Statement of observation:**

Now we can say that the poem deals with some urgent issue of the 20th century and the socio-political culture of Ireland.

8. **Questions for comprehension:**

Q.1. What does 'The second coming' mean—is it the coming of an individual?

Q.2. In how many parts can you divide the poem from the point of view of its themes?

Q.3. What is the theme of the first part?

Q.4. What is the theme of the second part?
Q.5. Does the second part have only one theme or more than one? What are they?

Q.6. Why does the poet describe his visions in the first and second part through metaphors, myths, legends, images etc.?

Q.7. How does the poet telescope the past into the present?

Q.8. Would it make any difference in the meaning if the poet had used the present continuous verbal form in the first three lines?

Q.9. What effect would be created if the nominal phrase pattern of MHQ (Modifier + Headword + Qualifier) would have been used in line 15? (A gaze ........ sun)

Q.10. Why have the desert birds been described as indignant?
LEDA AND THE SWAN

A SUDDEN blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the lions engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drops?
1. Reading aloud:

The students have by now, already read "The Second Coming". This poem bears a striking contrast to the preceding one, thematically, structurally and linguistically in both content and form. The former dealt with a futuristic enunciation while the present one deals with the one which happened in the past. The first poem dealt with the enunciation which will be a successor to the one of Christian civilization while the present one deals with the enunciation of Hellenic civilization. The first poem did not have dramatic element in the strict sense of the term. The syntactic patterns are straightforward and simple with not many deviances either lexical or grammatical. But in the present poem there is the description of an event taking place, the deeper implication of which is the core of the total "significance" of the poem.

The reading aloud should emphasise the kinetic verbal elements like "beating", "staggering", "caressing", "catching", "holding", "loosening", etc. These verbs emphasise the ongoing happening which is a single event.
1(a) Title:

The title "Leda and the Swan" clearly hints that the poem is going to deal with something which will be a consequence of the joint participation of the divine and the human. An alternative title, "The Rape of Leda" would have been immediately connected with the poetic narrative which describes the act of rape vividly. But the poet's intention was to emphasise the concept of the history of a civilization conveyed through the symbolical act of procreativity in which the participants are both the divine and the human.

1(b) Theme:

The last stanza puts forward the central thematic concern of the poem, in the form of an interrogative pattern. The possible answer to the question raised is implicit in the entire narrative. The birth of Hellenic civilization is caused by a divine scheme where the god of lightening and thunderbolt of the old testament (Zeus) descends on the earth with the accompaniment of his brute power allied with divine wisdom. The civilization that grew understood only the brute power which was an ingredient in engendering this civilization but remained oblivious of or indifferent to the
element of wisdom which could have sustained the civilization under reference after it had reached its glorious perfection. The power was used in destroying the civilization which have been saved by the restraining power of wisdom alone.

1(c) Silent Reading:

Having discussed so much the students may now be asked to read the poem silently.

It should not be difficult for the students in grasping the cognitive and literal meaning of the poem, especially in the first two stanzas where the narrative is a "complete whole" in the Aristotelian sense, with a beginning, a middle and an end. However the third stanza where there is a sudden shift to other allied events – broken wall, broken road and tower, Agamemnon dead – may present a temporary confusion in the mind of the students about the continuity of the cognitive meaning. This is because of highly structured use of language.
But these confusions in the minds of the students may be cleared by providing them the relevant extra-textual information.

1(d) _Extra-textual Information:_

The teacher can ask the students whether they could have responded reasonably to the poem in the absence of any extra-textual information.

Except for the use of a proper name Agamemnon there is no other word in the whole poem which may be described difficult in its denotative meaning. An intelligent student will hardly have to look up a dictionary for the meaning of any of the words. However, the reference to Agamemnon may prove to be incomprehensible. Here the teacher will provide some extra-textual information about Agamemnon.

The teacher can narrate the story of the birth of Clytemnestra and her betrayal of her husband Agamemnon who was killed on his return from the Trojan war, with the help of her accomplice. This explanation of the extra-textual context will fully explain the meaning of the last two lines of the third stanza beginning with “The broken wall ..........”
Here again, the information about the destruction of Troy can be given.

Troy stands for the pinnacle or perfection of a great ancient civilization which was completely ruined by the consequences of amorous entanglements. Both Agamemnon and Menelaus suffered because of their wives' violation of the sanctity of marriage and love bonds. The instruments of destruction of a civilization were Helen and Clytemnestra who were the product of the human and the divine.

2. Paraphrase:

Contrary to what the New Critics had objected to (Paraphrase and extra-textual information), for a comprehensive understanding of a poem.

The teacher can start like this:

There was a sudden blow which brought with it a kind of sweep of wind. This sudden assault was made by Zeus in the shape of a swan who was infatuated by Leda's beauty while she was bathing.
Leda's power to resist the assault was gone. Her finger and been rendered inactive by a mixture of confusion and terror of this sudden attack.

The outcome of the breaking down of Leda's resistance is the birth of Helen who is not only responsible for the destruction of Troy with its burning roof-tops but also for the death of Agamemnon.

The final question arises is whether any positive gains also came out of this act? Was Leda able to take on to herself part of the divine knowledge and power of Zeus before he dropped her from his indifferent beak?

This paraphrased version of the poem will definitely enable the students to penetrate deeper into the total significance of the act, involving physical violence, act of procreation, the birth of beauty symbolising perfection, lack of wisdom leading to destruction and the final collapse of all that has been accomplished by a civilization over a span of centuries of its life.
3. **Syntactic Pattern / Cohesion:**

Now the teacher can proceed with the analysis of the syntactic pattern line by line.

Line 1 begins with a sort of montage in a non-verbal clause, i.e. "a sudden blow", followed by a number of minor montages relating to the details of the act. The teacher can explain by giving other familiar examples that the act has been accomplished. The sexual assault by the powerful bird has been made. Here the word "still" is prominently significant,

"A sudden blow: the great wings beating still"

because it points to the continuity of the action started a while ago.

The vividness of the details of the act is to show the deliberate design of God, well thought out, planned and executed. This will make the vision of the enunciation of the new civilization more easily comprehensible.

In the first stanza the narrative is straight-forward, presented through significant snaps of a still camera which pulsate with profuse energies.
However the second stanza is arranged on the syntactic pattern of an interrogative sentence.

"How can those terrified vague fingers push the feathered glory from her loosening thighs? And how can a body laid in that white rush, But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

Here the rhythmic movement of the stanza disengages itself from the tension of the first stanza. It is not for nothing that a straight-forward narrative in the form of an interrogative statement is used. It is used to underscore the extra-ordinary emphasis on the absence of any doubt about the possibility of the outcome of this union of the divine and the human.

The third stanza points to the story of the death of Agamemnon.

The last and the fourth stanza again ends on interrogative note:

"Did she put on his knowledge with his power. Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?"
The answer to this question is "probably not" because knowledge and power do not co-exist.

3. **Foregrounding:**

Foregrounding in the first line of the second stanza where there is an ambiguous meaning, emerges from collocational evidence.

"How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?"

Obviously "vague" does not belong to the 'set' of either terror, fear or fingers. The possible meaning would be the humans inability to fully grasp the divine design in his administering human affairs.

The other lexical items stanza 3 which seem to be 'foreground' but are exactly not, are "the broken wall" the burning roof and tower" and Agamemnon dead" as they are all related to the life of Helen, the child of Leda and Zeus.

5. **Statement of Observation:**

While "The Second Coming" ended with a terrifying futuristic vision, this poem shows the poets concern in the
post was context where restraint, will have a restraining effect on future destruction by a mindless application of brute force. This poem can be the best example of precision, compactness and handling of mythology.

6. Question for Comprehension:

Q.1 What does the title with the conjunction “and” mean to you?

Q.2 Does the mythical allusion sound convincing? It is a pointer to the culture history of an ancient past?

Q.3 Does the poem have any clear cut development in regard to its cognitive meaning or its deeper implication?

Q.4 Does the concluding line of the poem show any reservation or emphatic doubt in the mind of the poet?

Q.5 What elements in the theme of the poem do you find to be of universal relevance?

Q.6 What does the poet gain by bringing in cumulative grammatical patterns in the first and the third stanzas?
Q.7 Why does the poet use the expression, "The brute blood of the heir" for the swan?

Q.8 Comment on the meaning of "The indifferent beak" referring to both the cognitive denotation and the deeper meaning.