

Night sweat by robert lowell essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The pain of aging, of slowly feeling the fire and passion flickering out is portrayed in “ Night Sweat” by Robert Lowell. Simply put it is of a man with an illness and his disorganised thought and feelings but deeper, there is his fear and his agony as he feels his youth and its hopes and dreams burn away and how he cannot meet the standards expected of him to write. But also there is his joy as in his wife he finds new inspiration and hope. The beginning of the poem plays some significance in developing the idea as it gives an insight of what the state of mind the poet is in.

In his room there are said to be “ plain things, my stalled equipment, the old broom” all three containing words: “ plain... stalled.

.. old,” all giving connotations of lack of vigour and passion, which may be reflecting upon what the poet feel about what had happened to his present life. But it seems sure that it has not always been like this.

He is “ living in a tidied room” suggests that his life is orderly, without the great disorganised tumults of thoughts or ideas, but now that colour, that passion and vigour had “ wilted white. “ The reason why Lowell believes to be the reason of his lack of creativity for writing is that he had been wrung dry by the “ bias of existing” expectations; expectations he had been able to meet in his youth but now he has to strain himself. He tells of how from his early youth he had wanted to write something great but failed; “ always inside me is the child who died”, the child referring to his dreams he had made for his future, however its will to live and give his life for poetry has not ended in him; “ always in me is his will to die. He sees himself as that he is caught in a “ black web”; invisible but inescapable, as the spider, which

sucks the life out of its victim, sucks the life out of Lowell. Also he describes his body as an “urn” perhaps referring to the fact he feels like there is a great restriction in time as his death seems inevitable or also that he feels that inside of him, like the urn, there is but ashes and his spirit has already withered up.

Though he believes it's all over for him and his hopes and dreams he finds inspiration in his wife. Before he feels this he talks of how he feels death and the vanity of trying. “Sweet salts embalms me” which paints the image of him being mummified which may be implying how though his body is not ruined yet his mind is. And also “the animal night sweats of the spirit burn”; the animal is perhaps referring to himself, his physical self, his body; something caged in “this world's dead weight and cycle” and his spirit which is burning away, his passion, his determination, and is being milked dry under pressure, and in this he feels vanity; as he “dabble in the dapple of the day” he sees his child, his hopes and dreams “exploding into dynamite. However his wife's light “alters everything” as it lightens his “leaded eyelids.” This maybe referring to the fact that he couldn't see properly.

Not in physical sight but perhaps of the mind blinded by “gray skulled horses”; an image similar to that of the “Grim Reaper” showing his great fear of death or of failure as he describes himself as “the soot of night.” Something perhaps meaning a flame that had burnt in the days of his youth which had now remains in but ashes in his closing years. Though his wife does nothing, she is “behind” him, through her presence “I see my flesh and bedding washed with light” he feels again that light of the morning, the same spirit and life. To conclude in the poem “Nights Sweat” by Robert

Lowell, through careful choice of diction, symbolism and other language techniques his feelings of hopelessness and the lack of vigour and, oppositely, at the ending his new-found hope from his wife is portrayed.