

Household gods

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



" Their life gave our lives meaning, but broken homes will not set again. Their parting was our dissolution, they will never know their household gods are slain. " An intense end to Philip Hobsbaum's poem ' Household gods' which presents the life of a broken home after the people that lived there have parted and left. Through the use of personification, rhyme, punctuation and diction, these small speeches convey the idea of a once happy and lively household now lost and the mournful end it faces.

Philip Hobsbaum's design of structure, punctuation and rhyme establish the furniture's' personified being. The poem is divided into nine stanzas, each consist of four lines enclosed by quotation marks to show a different speaker in each stanza. In the first, eighth, and ninth stanza the second and fourth lines rhyme, and these stanzas are spoken by the gods as a group. In stanzas two to seven, they speak as individuals, the first and third lines rhyme as well as the second and fourth.

This personification of the gods allow them to identify with the reader at a more personal level and be able to connect with him, The first stanza is spoken by the entire household, describing its role in observing the breaking of the lives of this couple " I saw them. I was there. " The author introduces the poem with a gloomy heavy tone, relying on words such as " breaking," " distraught," and " despair. " The couples' breakup is " mirrored" by the household and foreshadows their future departure. The second and third stanzas are from an individual point of view, they represent some of the couple's possessions recollecting their joyful past.

At first, what seems to be a musical instrument belonging to the woman grieves its disuse, stating that it has " so long been silent" and it laments

over the days when her “ long fingers once caressed [it]. ” It also introduces a passionate part of the couple’s relationship previously as it asks: “ was that how at one time she touched him? ” The third stanza introduces male’s possession as it recalls a happy past when “ his lips on mine...warmed my clay. ” This god is most likely a mug that the occupant used, and now he describes the “ kiss” that he used to receive as “ broken and swept away. These missing parts of the house are what take its life away; music brings joy to a home, and coffee in the morning is an indicator of life. The couple’s relationship can be related to the cup, as it was once warm full of embraces and kisses ‘ in the morning or in darkness’, and now it is broken and being “ swept away” as it ends. A rug mentions its experience next; it describes the past state of the couple as it used to serve ‘ their steady feet,’ but now their steps are ‘ tentative’ as they become more reluctant to come across each other.

In the past there was a sense of life to the house, but now the carpet feels sorrowful as it becomes a “ street for strangers” as it is no longer able to recognize the transformed couple. It expresses its dismay in the last line which does not flow with the previous stanza to show its feeling of worthlessness and abandonment; it used to serve this couple but now it is merely “ jute and wool” at the front of the house. The god in the fourth stanza, a room or the house also reflects on its abandoned state.

It describes the time when they cared for it and made it “ in terms of their vision”, however, the state that the room is in at this point shows neglect and deterioration as the “ walls are peeling. ” The house relates to the rug, as it also begins to feel useless after his “ occupants have fled. ” The sixth

and seventh stanzas describe the final scene that this house lives. The sixth stanza is spoken by a clock, which ironically speaks of time which does not repeat itself, unlike her hands. It also speaks about “ the climactical moment” which has passed and will never reoccur again, no matter “ whoever will come. This may refer to the house, which has reached an optimum point, and is now falling and could never be restored. The clock tries to “ cough a final chime” but it so badly neglected that it couldn’t “ henceforth [it is] dumb”. The seventh stanza is very similar to the first, except that it is being spoken from an individual point of view. A mirror is speaking about how it “ mirrored their coming here” and is now watching them leave; it is only concerned about “ their outer semblance” since it only deals with superficial aspects of people.

The repetition of this stanza serves as closure to the relationship of this couple and their departure, leaving the house for destruction and decay. The final two stanzas are spoken by the gods as a whole, describing the death of the gods as life leaves the house for good. The eighth stanza describes the image of the house: ‘ without a purpose,’ ‘ chairs not to be sat on,’ ‘ the books are stacked’. The author uses a metaphor in the last line ‘ a house grown cold’ to emphasize the death of the house, similar to the way a human corpse becomes after all life has disappeared from it and it slowly starts decaying.

The final stanza shows the reader that these gods cannot live without the presence of occupants, “ their life gave ours meaning. ” Yet there is no possible way for the return of these gods as “ broken homes will not set again”, the concluding presence of the gods is set in the last line “ they will

never know their household gods are slain” in order to show the oblivious manner of the couple who will never know of the suffering that those around them went through, and they will never learn of their death.

In this poem, Philip Hobsbaum integrates emotions with household objects in order to allow the reader to relate to a broken household. The author shows the strong consequences that are caused by a broken home, and the need for a strong relationship to maintain it. Hobsbaum seeks to show the readers that a broken home causes such powerful destruction, such as the death of gods, in order to motivate couples to maintain strong relationships, for their farewells are able to create irreversible damage.