

Twice shy by seamus heaney and the thickness

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



Both poems " Twice Shy" and " The Thickness of Ice" portray ideas of love, hurt and naivety; however there is a vast difference in how these ideas are interpreted. Twice Shy shows past hurt and naivety, and how it affects the characters in the present, whereas Thickness of Ice shows hurt and naivety in the present and therefore has a more cynical take on love. Twice Shy is narrated by a male character one evening as a woman he appears to be in love with accompanies him on a walk. The poem focuses on not only these two character, but also their surroundings.

Although the poem is narrated by only one character, you get to know both characters with quite some depth. In The Thickness of Ice there is one narrating character also, but the poem is largely focused on that one character. The main character is a female and the poem describes a relationship she is, or will be, a part of. Both poems offer very different takes on love however at heart both are very similar through how they describe the aftershock of a deep and meaningful relationship.

In 'Twice Shy', the recurrent simile of the hawk and prey seems to reflect the overall atmosphere of the poem. " Tremulous as a hawk," suggests the atmosphere is uneasy and prejudicial and yet still depicts serenity, composition and control. This simile is also repeated in stanza three " But tremulously we held as hawk and prey apart,' This tells the reader that despite the fact that physically the couple are close, their emotions and hearts are being held a frustrating distance apart as "[they] preserved classic decorum [and] deployed [their] talk with art.

The last time this simile is repeated is in the final stanza- " So, chary and excited as a thrush linked on a hawk," This implies that the couple are both now emotionally close and finally together. Throughout the poem, the hawk and the prey play the part of the two characters in an underlying metaphor. The way that the author has chosen a hawk and its prey to depict two lovers seems slightly pessimistic in the sense a hawk would ultimately kill its prey, which almost suggests that the poet is implying the relationship could only end in misery and disaster.

Similarly, in the poem *The Thickness of Ice*, the poet uses an extended metaphor of ice-skaters and ice to depict the two lovers- suggesting a relationship is hard to sustain and can easily break or 'thaw out'. However the cynical tone is more obvious in *The Thickness of Ice*, whereas it is underlying in *Twice Shy*. This could mean that in *Twice Shy*, the authors main objective was to focus on the rush and excitement of a budding relationship, and opposed to the pain and grief, which is a contrast to *The Thickness of Ice*.

In the poem *Twice Shy*, there appears to be a status difference between the two mentioned characters. The male narrator holds the opinion that the female he is with is of more importance of him. The phrase 'her scarf i?? la Bardot' suggests that the female is 'too good' for the male and has film star qualities such as elegance and grace. He feels as though he should try to impress her. This adds to the tension of the poem and makes the atmosphere slightly awkward from the first line.

However in Thickness of Ice, the characters are always portrayed as equal- regardless to whether it is a friends, lovers, acquaintances or enemies- making the poem more relaxed and lacking in tension. This lack of tension and apprehension however, makes it appear that the two lovers are not as in love as those in Twice Shy, as they seem to be 'content with simple movements' and not feel as though they need to give their partner anything. Both poems put across ideas of naivety and hurt, but in different forms.

Twice Shy shows how a new love 'turns' people into children- excitable and nervous; " With nervous childish talk. This child-like behaviour puts people into a situation of naivety, because all the strong emotions for a new partner often cover warning signals, putting that person into a prime position for getting hurt, which is exactly what is recalled in stanza four. This stanza shows how the lovers had both been hurt in the past by acting on emotion and " publish[ing] feeling and regret[ing] it all too late-". Likewise, The Thickness of Ice shows this naivety, but not in the same manner. Unlike in Twice Shy, the naivety from The Thickness of Ice comes from the voice of the poem.

The wording is very simple and secretive- like a child. The way the second section of each stanza is within brackets reflects a child like crush when everything must be kept a secret. Also, the childlike voice of the poem makes the narrating character seem more vulnerable, henceforth having a stronger impact on the reader and encouraging them to sympathise and/or empathise. However, in both poems; the naivety is counter attacked by a

sense of being guarded. This is depicted in Twice Shy mainly in the line 'Deployed our talk with art'.

This line relates to war, as to deploy is to place troops or weapons in battle formation; meaning the characters are defending themselves, but not with weapons. Both are guarding themselves with planned words and 'art'- possibly trying to outmaneuver each other in order to save themselves, should they need to. This idea of being guarded is mirrored in The Thickness of Ice in stanza three. When the relationship 'thaws' the characters guard themselves, and care only for themselves. They appear willing to do whatever it will take to stay alive- despite the past relationship. Both poems share a theme of secrecy.

This is shown in Twice Shy in stanza four 'Not to publish feeling'. In this stanza, it is explained that the character feels that by letting his emotions be known to his companion, there is a danger of things going wrong and 'burst[ing] in hate. ' And so they use 'nervous childish talk' instead to cover the situation. This shows very strongly the caution between characters and how this caution stops emotions from developing. In Thickness of Ice, secrecy is shown within the punctuation of the poem. In each stanza, the second half is within brackets and states almost what the narrating character is feeling.

It is as if the words outside the brackets are things she can openly discuss, but everything else is what she feels too guilty or too timid to say. Despite both poems talking about the hurt that can occur within a relationship; both show a new chance and new hope at love- that even when things go really

wrong; good could come out of it. In Twice Shy, this is shown by the two characters giving a new relationship a chance even though they have been hurt in the past, and in The Thickness of Ice, it is shown in the brackets of the last stanza.

The character hints that she wants to be friends again, and possibly more, even after having learnt the 'thinness of ice'- a contradiction to the title. Twice Shy's vocabulary has a greater amount of complexity than The Thickness of Ice however, the latter poem seems to be more emotionally orientated. Thickness of Ice is a lot more personal to the narrating character and has more personal insights 'though secretly I'll be hoping we'll become much more.' whereas in Twice Shy the narrating character remains mostly detached. The poem shows no relation to his personal emotions, just an awareness of the situation and his surroundings.

In conclusion, both poems portray a similar account of the excitement and the pain that occurs both in and around a relationship, but the focus of each emotion is different in both poems. Twice Shy is orientated around the excitement and hope of a budding relationship and touches on the subject of how past hurt and let down can affect how one goes about a new relationship whereas Thickness of Ice focuses on the breakdown and how it affects the characters' behaviour to each other and to themselves. Both poems offer a compelling account of a relationship and both explore how such strong emotions can change how humans would usually act.