

My impressions from poetry

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Longing as a theme in classic poems

Longing for something can often be a terrible feeling. Wanting something that you know you cannot have never feels well. Longing can apply to a number of things, such as wanting a material object, wanting a relationship or some sort of connection with someone, or longing for change, and many more. Longing is quite a common theme in several of the poems that we have read in class this semester. A few of these poems that illustrate the feeling of longing would be Mary Oliver's *Wild Geese*, William Wordsworth's *The World Is Too Much With Us*, and lastly in Emily Dickinson's *My Life had Stood – a Loaded Gun*.

First, the idea of longing can be observed in the poem *Wild Geese*, by Mary Oliver. Throughout the poem, the narrator gives examples of imperfections and struggles. An example of this would be, "Tell me about your despair, yours, and I will tell you mine" (Oliver 557). She then compares them to nature, and shows how nature goes on just as it is supposed to, no matter what issues human beings face. This is shown in the quote, "Meanwhile, the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, are heading home again" (Oliver 557). Mary Oliver is portraying the daily struggles of humans, and how they long to be as free and pure as the wild geese are in the sky.

Similar to *Wild Geese*, feeling of longing can be felt in the poem *The World Is Too Much With Us*, written by William Wordsworth. In this poem, the author is angrily discussing the modern world's disconnect with nature. This can be seen in the line, "Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers" (Wordsworth 563). He is longing for that same connection again, and is upset

that the rest of the modern world won't follow suit. An example of this would be when the author wrote, "for this, for everything, we are out of tune" (Wordsworth 563). The author sees all of the beauty and wonder in nature, and longs for the rest of the world to make the same connection.

Lastly, we can observe a sense of longing in the poem *My Life had Stood – a Loaded Gun*, by Emily Dickinson. This poem shows the personification of a firearm, presumably a rifle, and how it longs to please and protect its owner. An example can be seen in this line, "And do I smile, such cordial light" (Dickinson 467). This not only is showing how the narrator gets joy out of being of use to their owner, but also is symbolic of muzzle flash right when the rifle is fired. The feeling of longing can be felt when reading the line, "My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun – In Corners – till a Day – The Owner passed – identified – And carried Me away" (Dickinson 467). The narrator is just waiting and waiting, longing for a purpose, until one day when the owner comes in and takes the rifle.

In conclusion, several of the poems that we have read in class this semester have some feelings of longing within them. A few examples of these poems would be *Wild Geese* by Mary Oliver, *The World Is Too Much With Us* by William Wordsworth, and *My Life had Stood – a Loaded Gun* by Emily Dickinson. In each of these stories, the narrator is longing for something different, whether it's longing to escape from the struggles of life and to be as free as nature is, longing for the rest of the world to see things as you do, or longing to serve a purpose. In some of these poems the narrator achieved what they were longing for, while others were left still longing for the

unachievable. At the end of the day, what should be focused on and appreciated, is what you already have.