

Between the world and me: a poetic analysis

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TP-CASTT: Between the World and Me

Title: Upon reading the title, I interpreted it to mean that the poem would discuss secrets that a person had which only the world would know. It is a common idiomatic expression to say that your secrets are safe with different inanimate objects because they simply cannot tell anyone else yet it lifts the burden off of your chest quite a bit.

Paraphrase: I walk through the woods and stumbles upon a startling scene which comes between the present state of affairs and me. There is a skeleton on the ground, which is also burned along with the tree it crouches below. Clothing is scattered about and there is evidence of a man who once lived. I find myself peering into the life once lived. I see the bones come to life, to put on a play, a final act of the painful concluding moments of his acting career. I see the scene as though I was there; people come from all about as though it is a social gathering. I feel the hatred. They tear away my clothes and beat me pugnaciously. I screamed in agony but could not be heard for lack of care. I am feathered and tarred, humiliated, and my only relief is knowing death is finally near as I am doused in gasoline. They burn me but they do not know that they have truly set me free from this horrid world of pain and suffering. Now I lay here for all eternity under this tree, waiting for somebody to stumble upon me.

Connotation: The author creates a buildup of suspense within the first stanza through his use of phrases such as “ stumbled suddenly upon the thing” and “ stumbled upon it” rather than simply telling the reader what “ it” was. This causes the reader to wish to continue and to find out what “ it” was.

Throughout the poem, the author takes care to describe his scene with the most rectifying imagery through phrases which includes “ a design of white bones slumbering forgottenly upon a cushion of ashes” rather than simply stating “ there was a skeleton which had been burned. The imagery in this poem adds the horrific scene being sculpted in the mind’s eye of the reader which helps convey the tragedy which took place. There is an allusion to a deity of some sort in the line “ a charred stump of a sapling pointing a blunt finger accusingly at the sky” as though the gods were responsible for what had occurred. The author juxtaposes the scattered belongings of the victim “ vacant shoe, empty tie, tipped shirt” with those of the onlookers “ butt-ends of cigars and cigarettes, peanut shells, a drained gin-flask, and a whore’s lipstick” giving the first glimpse of the way in which the man was murdered, a social event. “ The sun died in the sky” is the beginning of the gruesome description and signifies a changing point in the story. In the third stanza, the speaker becomes one with the deceased and begins to experience what occurred in the closing moments of his life. The fourth stanza brings to life the witnesses of the scene and embodies just how casually they were gathering to destroy a life, “ the gin-flask passes from mouth to mouth, cigars and cigarettes glowed, the whore smeared lipstick red upon her lips.” In the final stanza of the poem the speaker experiences the tragedies of “ battering my teeth into my throat,” “ skin clung to the bubbling hot tar,” and “ cooled by a baptism of gasoline.” These are all prime examples of the insightful imagery which the poet utilizes to convey the appalling scene to the reader. In the final moments of life, the poet demonstrates how helpless

the victim was as he “clutched childlike” to “death” as he begged to be taken away from the pain.

Attitude: The poem begins in rather ebullient manner as the speaker wanders through a sunny day in the forest. However, it quickly takes a turn to become more macabre as it depicts the scene of the death and tragedy. Surprisingly, despite the tragedy, the speaker remains quite phlegmatic throughout the poem as he describes what is occurring but not in a vengeful or angry way. He is disgusted with the events but hardly shows it and prefers to allow the reader to simply gather the facts from their reading rather than attempting to force his own outlook on the calamity on them. The narrator being uninvolved emotionally leaves more room for the reader to become involved, allowing the poem to have a grander impact.

Shifts: There are two shifts in the poem. The first shift takes place after the first stanza when the “sooty details of the scene rose, thrusting themselves between the world and me” as the poem changes from a typical stroll through the wilderness to one of mystery. The next shift occurs in the third stanza going into the fourth as the speaker is so taken aback by the scene that he relives the memories of the final moments by becoming one with the skeleton.

Title: The title represents the scene which has so unexpectedly come between the speaker and what is currently happening in the world. He is now too preoccupied with the scene to pay any attention to the world around him.

Theme: The theme of the poem is that tragedy should not be a social gathering. The poet left out specific descriptions of who the deceased was so as to allow the message to be had by anyone who would read this poem, without bias. The world should not be accepting of lynching's and death in the morbid way that it is currently.

TP-CASTT: The Fish

Title: I read the title of this poem to be an obvious indication that there would be some form of Man vs. Nature conflict within the poem.

Furthermore, I imagined a particularly significant fish because it is not simply " a" fish, but rather " the" fish.

Paraphrase: I held the prize catch in my hands; he was truly defeated. The most sagacious fish of them all had fallen without a fight to my mighty fishing rod. The fish was obviously an elder and indubitably grander than most, he was simply done fighting. He had struggled all his life and now merely wanted to rest. He wore the bouts that he had won with the plethora of fisherman he had faced as though they were prizes, but ones which he no longer seemed to treasure as he once did. I felt a sense of accomplishment overwhelm me in that moment. However, upon looking around me, I realized that this sense of accomplishment was worthless when there was so much beauty to be had in my surroundings. The fish was not truly what I desired, so I released him.

Connotation: The author quickly sets up the scene of a man in a boat with his hands on his greatest prize in the first four lines of the poem. Then, suddenly, the poet throws a curveball into the mix by stating " he didn't

fight” which is incredibly abnormal for fish, especially one of such size and character. These two parts juxtapose the amazing accomplishment with the ease of which it was accomplished due to the willingness of the fish to be caught. The speaker then goes into immense detail and imagery about how the “ brown skin hung like strips like ancient wall paper” and it possessed “ frightening gills, fresh and crisp with blood.” Through the use of this imagery, similes, and much more the poet is able to depict to the reader the sagacity of the fish which has been caught and further the question of why the fish did not fight. The poet brings in the common idiomatic expression of “ going into the light” signifying death in the line “ it was more like the tipping of an object toward the light” as the fish ignores the fisherman to simply accept his finality as a reality and await his long deserved fate. The poet compares the fish’s many successful escape attempts to “ medals with their ribbons frayed and wavering” in a simile which sets up the deeper meaning of the poem as being the fact that prizes are not all there is in life. The speaker is then enlightened by this fact, which allows him to feel the victory, not of catching the fish, but rather of having an epiphany that he was wasting his life chasing useless accomplishments. The last eight lines of the poem begin a new outlook for the speaker as he admires the world and the beauty around him, manifested in the form of a rainbow coming over all of the normal objects which are actually extraordinary. The entire poem is a type of bathos as the whole poem leads up to the short and simple line of “ And I let the fish go” which is a large anticlimax, when looked at from a purely literal standpoint. However, when the deeper meaning is taken into account, the final line of the poem can be seen as the first action in a string of events

which was cause by the epiphany which will forever change the fisherman's life.

Attitude: The poem begins with an ignorant tone, one of shallow thinking and simple justification. However, the speaker is quickly awestruck by the sagacity of the fish which he has caught and is placed into somewhat of a spell of wonder at the wisdom behind the fish's eyes. The poem quickly comes to a tone of realization and epiphany as the speaker becomes of aware of the false dreams he has been chasing uselessly all his life.

Shifts: There are three shifts in the poem. The first takes place in line five when the speaker realizes something strange is happening and states " He didn't fight." The following shift occurs at the point when the speaker begins to admire the fish for its wisdom and something different about its character, " I admired his sullen face." The final shift occurs when " victory filled up the little rented boat." However, this is not victory in the normal sense but a sense of knowing that he has truly learned something through this experience with the fish.

Title: The title now suggests an abnormally important fish which was able to change a man's life.

Theme: The theme of this poem is that impressiveness is not everything in life and that simply seeking popular accomplishments all your life will leave you feeling as though your life was not full at the end of it, just as the fish feels. The author juxtaposes between the timeworn, experienced fish and the fledgling, fresh fisherman to emphasize this point by showing that the young

may still realize this dilemma and avoid growing old without doing what is meaningful to them if they change their ways now.