

Tennyson close analysis



**ASSIGN
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Tennyson was published in 1830 and is the text I have chosen to do closely analyze. The subject matter of the poem was taken from one of Shakespearean plays titled "Measure for Measure", and the line: "Marina in the mooted grange," gave Tennyson the inspiration to write of a young woman waiting for her lover. The two texts share a common theme of abandonment, as in Shakespearean play the young woman is also diligently awaiting the return of her lover Angelo after his desertion upon discovering her loss of dowry.

Similarly to Shakespearean text, Marianne lacks action or any narrative movement, the entire poem serving as an extended depiction of the melancholy isolation a young woman experiences whilst pining for her vacant lover. The language, meter, format and tone of the poem contribute to the inherent themes of isolation, death and decay, which I will closely examine in this close reading exercise. Unlike some of Tennyson other works such as Ulysses, Marianne doesn't have a dramatic monologue although it does feature a refrain.

This method isolates Marina from us, and the poem being written in a third person lyrical narrative makes the title guru unable to linguistically control her own poem. The refrain is the only part within the poem in which Marina is able to speak out directly to the reader as well as the only form of dialogue: in the first stanza, line's 9-12 "My life is dreary/He cometh not' she said:/She said, 'I am areaway, areaway, I would that I were dead! Her desperation is evident to the reader, and 'she said' being written in past tense is significant since we are left wondering of her fate as a result of her misery. The refrain undergoes minor changes throughout the poem, giving a small fragment of

pope to both the reader and Marina who is stuck in a monotonous cycle of despair. In the second, third and fourth stanza she alternates between 'day, night and light', in the final 9-12 lines of the stanza, emphasizes that nothing really changes since her feelings of being 'away continue regardless of the time of day.

In the final stanza, in the 9-12th lines, the refrain changes dramatically from the continuous and unchanging refrain the reader had become accustomed to. Marina now 'Weeps' instead of 'says' and asks 'God' to end her misery, thus the plea is no longer a wish but a prayer and an appeal, signifying the end to all hope. She is now sure that 'he' will never return and her recognition of this shows that she accepts it. The use of the pronoun 'he' in the refrain is interesting. We never learn 'his' name or of his existence therefore his presence in the poem is very ambiguous.

It could be that Marina is just waiting for a lover who has deserted her, or that 'he' could be symbolic of a male dominant society that doesn't help her. The refrain shapes majority of the poem as it allows the reader to understand Marina's feelings, whereas the language and the setting only serve as a metaphor for her internal anguish and isolation. Although the poem is static, meaning it involves no action, the pathetic fallacy and personification of the setting is a reflection of Marina's psychological decay as well as the world that she inhabits.

In the first stanza, from lines 1 to 7, Marina's surroundings are described as 'blackest', 'rusty', 'broken', 'weeded and worn', and 'lonely'. Everything that is man-made is in a state of decay, symbolic for Marina's personal

deteriorating and dissatisfaction of men. The iambic tetrameter, which sets the rhythmic, repetitive tone of the poem, is constantly interrupted by the refrain at the end of each stanza, symbolic to how Marianne can never feel at ease and is always in a state of psychological unrest.

The three four-line rhyme units pattern of ABA CDC BEEF entrap the reader, since the E and F essentially remain the same in each stanza, which parallels with Marina's own entrapment. Words such as 'shrieks' and 'cricked' in the sixth stanza between on line 2 and 5, are Tennyson's use of onomatopoeia to further involve the reader in how Marina is feeling by using harsh and penetrating sounds. Through close analysis there are signs of hope Marina instills in us for both her fate and the return of her lover.

In the first stanza on line 6, it is described that 'unlisted was the clinking latch' emphasizing her hope for his return, and in the second stanza on line 8, when she 'glanced athwart the gloaming flats,' although the use of 'gloaming' is a morbid foreshadowing, Marina watches her surroundings as if she is waiting for a soldier to return from the battlefield and into her open arms. But as Marina deteriorates and hope fails her, so does the language in the poem.

In the sixth stanza between lines 6 and 8, Marina descends into madness as her house becomes haunted by 'old faces, glimmered thro' the doors, [old toasters, trod the upper floors, [old voices called her from without. ' The use of past tense with 'glimmered' and 'called' signifies that Marianne is still living in the past, as her libido flows backwards. She remembers happier times because she is haunted, and the psychological reversions as well as

physical deterioration move in parallel order, creating overwhelming sense of degeneration and loss.

In the last stanza, the sparrow's chirrup on the roof, [the slow clock ticking,' this first and second line stood out. 'The sparrow is symbolic because it is a sign of impending death, in Christian homeboys the sparrow was seen as offering made by person without any means. As for the 'slow clock ticking, this can be interpreted for the lack of time and the poem's constant circular motion before reaching its climax in the final stanza. However, because the clock is about to come to a halt it could also have the double meaning for Marina's impending death.

Another literary symbol that Tennyson uses to draw up on Marina's yearning for her lover is the polar tree. The polar tree is a classic symbol of the renegade lover and his broken promise; it can be interpreted as a phallic symbol since it provides the only break in the otherwise barren and flat landscape. Within classic mythology the poplar tree is used in the text *Metamorphoses*, where Ovid describes how Niobe, deserted by Paris, addresses the poplar on which Paris has carved his promise not to desert her. This interpretation is relevant to the reoccurring theme of abandonment and isolation within the poem.

In the fourth stanza, the fifth line introduces the poplar tree as the 'Hard by a poplar shoo alleyway's silver-green with gnarled bark also making it's existence sound temperamental and deteriorating through the use of 'gnarled bark and 'silver-green', these adjectives making it unappealing in the mind of the reader. Marina lusts for the company of her previous lover,

so when she sees the gusty shadow sway,' in the following fourth line of the fifth stanza, this is the remainder of the sexual dominance her lover had over her and his absence in her life which has been replaced by this desolate tree.

The fact that she is still pining over his vacancy shows that he still holds power over her and is able to manipulate her, which could be said of women in society being under the control of men during Tennyson time. The poplar tree's isolation haunts Marina even in sleep, because it eternally serves as a remainder of the one who will never come. Death is also a prominent motif throughout the poem, as 'dead' is repeated in the last line of every stanza in the refrain.

In the climaxing, last stanza of the poem, Tennyson wrote on the sixth line 'but she loathed the hour/When the thick-mooted sunbeam lay, this phrase is emphasized by the caesura directly prior to it, and the comparatively period lacking punctuation which follows. The words thick and 'lay give the reader the impression that Marina's world is coated in dust, suggesting that it is morality which weighs her down since her life is bleak and oppressive. This idea is further emphasized by the day drawing to a close when Tennyson wrote in the last stanza on the 8th line, 'and the Dallas sloping toward his western bower. The imagery here is suggestive of the sun setting and her moving towards Angelo since the connotation of light has to do with living and mortality. The ending of the day, and the drawing of the poem can be interpreted as the ending of Marina's own life. In conclusion, much of Tennyson formation of the character Marina can be seen as a projection of his own psychological issues. His powerful use of imagery and pathetic

fallacy illustrates the struggle Marina faces between life and death as she diligently awaits her lovers return.