Teaching Romantic Poetry: Experiment and Experience

Arvind Jadhav
Yashwantrao Chavan College of Science, Karad
==

Abstract

In this paper, attempt is made to delineate the English teachers' experiment of teaching romantic poetry and students' experience of learning. It focuses on the two famous short lyrical poems of the romantic period: William Wordsworth's *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* (1804) and Lord Byron's *She Walks in Beauty* (1815). These lyrical poems are written in iambic tetrameter. The former celebrates the beauty of the nature, while the latter celebrates the beauty of the unknown maid. The linguistic and literary peculiarities in both the contemporary poems are explored.

The advanced learners of the literature are necessarily expected to know these linguistic and literary subtleties for better appreciation of these poems. The analyses of the selected poems are presented in the paper. These analyses are based on the framework of Leech (1969) in which he considers criticism and stylistics as complementary and necessary for literary analysis.

The paper concludes that both Wordsworth and Byron succeeded in representing their perceptual experiences through *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* and *She Walks in Beauty,* respectively. We observed their unique style in their poetry despite of the numerous similarities. It is to be noted that a creator of the text (a poet), the process of creation (creativity, imagination, etc.), its representation in a form of the text (a product), and the (linguistic and/or non-linguistic) context are most prominent aspects in poetic composition.

Keywords: Teaching Romantic Poetry, Experiment and Experience, Wordsworth, *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,* Byron, *She Walks in Beauty.*

Poetry appreciation can be a rewarding experience for the teachers as well as students if teachers succeed to involve students actively through different activities and skills.

Teachers' expertise and timely interventions will also help students to appreciate literary texts better.

British Romanticism

As Day (2012) mentions, "Romanticism was a revolutionary intellectual and artistic movement that generated some of the most popular and influential texts British and American literary history". As rightly said it was intellectual and artistic movement that includes philosophy and different kinds of arts, especially painting and literature. Form the literary point of view, Romanticism was a revolt against stereotyped neo-classical ideas, aristocratic personae or characters, eloquent language, and the themes suitable to high class society. On the other hand, Romanticism adopted common country life, common people, simple language, nature, themes related to these and such people and the environment around them. Wordsworth advocated his idea of poetry as, "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings".

The beginning of Romantic period is normally considered from the publication of *Lyrical Ballads (1798)* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The major poets of romantic period were William Blake (1757-1827), William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), John Keats (1795-1821), and Lord Byron (1788-1824).

Wordsworth and Byron

Both Wordsworth and Byron were influential romanticists in crafting poetry. Both enjoyed the immense popularity. 'They met intimately just once, in the spring of 1815' (McGann 1999: 1). There was an intellectual rivalry between these poets. Professor McGann (1999) explained this rivalry and art of these poets in detail in his published lecture. Professor McGann (1999) also put forth the fact about Byron and Shakespeare that, "Of our great English writers, only Shakespeare has had a greater influence on world literature and culture. And yet it's also true that Byron remains the least honoured at home". Thus, he admits Byron's great contribution but receiving less honour in the country.

The two poems – Wordsworth's *Daffodils* and Byron's *She Walks in Beauty* – are selected for further analysis. These poems originally had no titles. The initial line of each poem was considered as the title of the poem. These are *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* and *She Walks in Beauty.* The former is also known as *Daffodils.*

The analysis is presented as below. Firstly, we consider William Wordsworth's *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud.* Let us see the rhyme scheme of the poem and its metrical composition.

Prosodic Analysis of *I Wandered lonely as a Cloud*

×	/	×	/	×	/	×	/		
I	wandered	lonely	as	a	Cloud				A
×	/	×	/	×	/	×	/		
That	floats	on	high	o'er	vales	and	hills,		B
×	/	×	/	×	/	×	/		
When	all	at	once	I	saw	a	crowd,		A
×	/	×	/ ×	/ × /					
A	host,	of	golden	daffodils;					B
× /	×	/	× /	×	/				
Beside	the	lake,	beneath	the	trees,				C
× /	×	/ ×	/	×	/				
Fluttering	and	dancing	in	the	breeze.				C

× / ×	/	×	/	×	/		
Continuous	as	the	stars	that	Shine		A
×	/ ×	/	×	/ ×	/		
And	twinkle	on	the	milky	way,		B
×	/	×	/ ×	/ ×	/		
They	stretched	in	never-	ending	Line		A
×/	×	/ ×	/	×	/		
Along	the	margin	of	a	bay:		B
×	/ ×	/	×	/	×	/	
Ten	thousand	saw	I	at	a	glance,	C
× /	×	/	×	/ ×	/		
Tossing	their	heads	in	sprightly	dance.		C

								Rhyme
×	/	× /	×	/	×	/		
The	waves	beside	them	danced;	but	They		A
×	/	×	/ ×	/	×	/		
Out-	did	the	sparklin g	waves	in	glee:		B
×	/ ×	/	×	/	×	/		
A	poet	could	not	but	be	gay,		A
×	/	×	/ ×	/ × /				
In	such	a	jocund	company:				B
×	/	×	/	×	/ ×	/		
I	gazed-	and	gazed-	but	little	Thought		C
×	/	×	/	×	/	×	/	
What	wealth	the	show	to	me	had	brought:	C

								Rhyme
×	/	×	/	×	/	×	/	
For	oft,	when	on	my	couch	I	Lie	A
×	/ ×	/	×	/ ×	/			
In	vacant	or	in	pensive	mood,			B
×	/	× /	×	/ ×	/			
They	flash	upon	that	inward	Eye			A
×	/	×	/	×	/ × /			
Which	is	the	bliss	of	solitude;			B
×	/	×	/	×	/ ×	/		
And	then	my	heart	with	pleasure	fills,		C
×	/ ×	/	×	/ × /				
And	dances	with	the	daffodils.				C

As observed, the poem is comprised of 24 lines in iambic tetrameter. There are four stanzas, six lines each. The rhyme-scheme ABABCC is consistently maintained in the poem. The poetic diction is simple. The contrast of mental and physical experiences is represented in the description of the poem. The outward beauty of the daffodils and inner mental peace is discussed. The journey begins from the *loneliness* in the first stanza and ends with the *bliss of solitude* in the last stanza. Both loneliness and solitude imply mental aloofness, distant emotional state. However, the loneliness has negative implication, and it is a feeling of distress and discomfort, while the solitude has positive implication, and it is a feeling of peace and comfort.

We found the extensive use of alliteration device in the poem. Alliteration is the repletion of a speech sound in a sequence of nearby words. Usually, the term is applied only to consonants, and only when the recurrent sound is made emphatic because it begins a word or a stressed syllable within a word (Abrams & Harpham 2009: 18). The examples are given below:

Line 3:	/w/	in *when*, *once*, and *crowd*
Line 4:	/d/	in *golden* and *daffodils*
Line 5:	/b/	*beside* and *beneath*

We also found the structural parallelism in the Line 5, i.e. beside the lake, beneath the trees.

Line 7:	/s/	in *stars* and *shine*
Line 13:	/ð/	in *the*, *them*, and *they*
Line 18:	/w/	in *what* and *wealth*
Line 21:	/ð/	in *they* and *that*
Line 24:	/d/	in *dances* and *daffodils*

Like alliteration, we also find the use of assonance extensively. Assonance is the repetition of identical or similar vowels–especially in stressed syllables–in a sequence of nearby words (Abrams and Harpham 2015:12). The examples are given below.

Line 4:	/o/	in *host*, *golden* and *daffodils*
Line 5:	/i/	in *beside* and *beneath*
Line 5:	/i:/	in *beneath* and *trees*
Line 6:	/ŋ/	in *fluttering* and *dancing*
Line 7:	/æ/	in *as* and *that*
Line 10:	/o/	in *along* and *of*
Line 13:	/e/	in *them* and *they*
Line 19:	/ɒ/	in *for*, *oft*, and *on*

Line 22:   /i/   in *which*, *is*, *bliss* and *solitude*

Line 23:   /e/   in *then* and *pleasure*

Besides the use of alliteration and assonance, we observe the repetition of prepositions *in*, for instance, in Line 20 and the verb *gazed* in Line 17. We also find differentiation in the spelling of the word *over* as *o'er* (Line 2) and used the archaic and literary form of *often* i.e. *oft* (Line 19). The use of compounding, with hyphenation and coordinating conjunction, is noteworthy in the phrases such as *Vales and hills* (Line 2), *fluttering and dancing* (Line 6), *never-ending* (Line 9), *out-did* (Line 14), *gazed-and-gazed* (Line 17), etc. The frequent use of prepositions after the nouns and verbs can also be observed.

The description of nature is prominent in the poem. The words such cloud, valleys and the hills, daffodils, lake, trees, breeze, stars, milky way and bay are used to create the scene in the first three stanzas. The description in the three stanzas is about the outer beauty in the world. However, the last stanza is contrasted with the previous three. It is about mental and inner world. The word *vacant* suggests the emptiness, the hollowness, and the nothingness of the life. The serious, thoughtful mood at the beginning leads to the hopeful and happy mood, and the poem ends with the bliss of solitude and eternal peace. It seems to be a spiritual journey from outside to the inside, from outer physical world to the inner psychological world.

Next, we discuss another romantic poem *She Walks in Beauty* by Lord Byron below. Firstly, we discuss the rhyme scheme, its metrical composition, and its diction.

Prosodic Analysis of *She walks in beauty*

×	/	×	/	×	/	×	/	
She	walks	in	beauty,	like	the	night		A
×	/	×	/	×	/	×	/	
Of	cloudless	climes	and	starry	skies;			B
×	/	×	/	×	/	×	/	
And	all	that's	best	of	dark	and	bright	A

×	/		×	/ ×	/		×	/		
Meet	in		her	aspect	and		her	eyes:		B

×	/ ×	/		×	/ ×	/		
Thus	mellow'd	to		that	tender	light		A

×	/		×	/ ×	/		× /		
Which	heaven		to	gaudy	day		denies.		B

×	/		×	/		×	/		×	/		
One	shade		the	more,		one	ray		the	less,		C

×	/	× /		×	/ ×	/		
Had	half-	impair'd	the		nameless	grace		D

×	/		×	/ ×	/ ×		/		
Which	waves		in	every	raven		tress,		C

×	/ ×	/ ×	/		×	/		
Or	softly	lightens	o'er		her	face;		D

×	/		×	/ ×	/		× /		
Where	thoughts		serenely	sweet	express				C

×	/		×	/		×	/ ×	/		
How	Pure		how	dear		their	dwelling-	place.		D

×	/		×	/		×	/		×	/		
And	on		that	cheek,		and	o'er		that	brow,		E

×	/		×	/		×	/ × /		
So	soft,		so	calm,		yet	eloquent,		F

×	/		×	/		×	/		×	/		
The	smiles		that	win,		the	tints		that	glow,		E

×	/		×	/		×	/		× /		
But	tell		of	days		in	goodness	spent,		F

×	/		×	/		×	/		× /		
A	mind		at	peace		with	all	below,		E

×	/		×	/		×	/ × /		
A	heart		whose	love	is		innocent!		F

As observed, the rhyme scheme of the poem *She Walks in Beauty* is **ABABAB** throughout the poem across three stanzas. It is written in iambic tetrameter. It is 18 lines poem composed in 3 stanzas. Each stanza is of six lines. Byron described the unknown maiden beauty in the poem. He explains her external beauty and ends the poem with her internal qualities such as purity of thoughts, good heart, innocence, etc. and infers that her

===

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 24:7 July 2024**
Arvind Jadhav
Teaching Romantic Poetry: Experiment and Experience   37

external beauty reflects her internal goodness and eternal peaceful mind. Let us see the linguistic features of the poem. The alliteration is used in the poem as below.

Line 2:   /k/   in *cloudless* and *climes*

Line 2:   /s/   in *starry* and *skies*

Line 5:   /ð/   in *this* and *that*

Line 6:   /d/   in *day* and *denies*

Line 8:   /h/   in *had* and *half*

Line 9:   /w/   in *which* and *waves*

Line 11:   /s/   in *serenely* and *sweet*

Line 12:   /d/   in *dear* and *dwelling*

The assonance is also observed in the poem as below.

Line 2:   /ai/   in *climes* and *skies.*

Line 7:   /e/   in *shade* and *ray*

Line 8:   /e/   in *nameless* and *grace*

Line 14:   /o/   in *soft* and *eloquent*

After the discussion of rhyme scheme, metrical composition, and the use of devices such as alliteration and assonance, we proceed to the discussion of other linguistic features. The emphatic *how* is occurred twice in Line 12. The demonstrative pronoun *that* is occurred twice in Line 13. We observe the structural parallelism in the initial lines of the second and third stanza i.e. *one shade the more, one ray the less* (Line 7) and *and on that cheek, and o'er that brow* (Line 13). It is also observed in *the smiles that win, the tints that glow* (Line 15). The contrast of voiced and voiceless stops i.e. /p/ and /b/ are used in Line 17. There are 14 Prepositional phrases in 18 lines and the poet has used nominal and adjectival phrases extensively to create the picture to portray the unknown maiden beauty.

Next, we discuss the thematic and other aspects of the poem. The light and darkness are contrasted in the poem. The day and night, clouds and stars are compared with her bright complexion and her dark hair. The darkness and brightness can be equated with the

philosophy of life. The life is comprised of all the mixture of good and bad things, the happiness and the sorrow, and comfort and discomfort.

The poem begins with the graceful walk of the nameless beautiful girl. Her beauty is compared with the beautiful cloudless starry skies. She is the perfect combination of light and darkness. Her complexion of skin is fair while her hair and the colour of her eyes is dark. He further explains everything in her is in perfect proportion. The single mistake in that might have ruined her beauty, he cautions as in *one shade the more, one ray the less, had half impair'd the nameless grace.* She is completely unknown to the poet, he mentions. The dark locks of the hair moving softly on her face. The serenity and purity are expressed on her face, he adds. The poet imagines that there must be pure heart inside such a beautiful, innocent, graceful girl. He witnesses the softness, the calmness, and the glow on her face and assures that it is an outward expression of the underlying good heart and peaceful mind.

It also suggests that the man should maintain eternal peace and innocence; he should be good at heart. The poet transcends his thoughts beyond the physical beauty and glorifies the platonic love.

Comparison of *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* and *She Walks in Beauty*

Thus, it is attempted to explore the linguistic as well as literary subtleties of the two lyrical short poems of the romantic period. It is observed that William Wordsworth and Lord Byron had a great eloquence in poetic composition despite of their different styles. The lyrical quality, the use of devices such as alliteration and assonance, the metrical pattern, the consistent rhyme-scheme, and use of prepositional phrases were the commonalities in these poems. While the use of different but suitable rhyming patterns, the method of development of the themes, and the precedence of certain diction over others were the differences that defined their own distinct styles.

The limitation of the methodology is that the quantitative analyses of these poems. These poems can further be analysed systematically by using multivariate statistical methods suggested in Bruno (1974). In this methodology, he has defined 31 variables such as number of words, number of syllables, median number of syllables, row mean, column mean, verb-noun ratio, verb-adjective ratio, percentage of nouns, percentage of verbs, etc. In the present

analyses, the attempt is made in this direction, but it can be extended further for more accurate quantitative data and its interpretation.

Another limitation of the present analysis to be noted is that the focus has remained more on the linguistic analysis rather than on the comprehensive literary analysis. It can further be extended to Byron's *She Walks in Beauty* as Steen (1999) has attempted for Wordsworth's *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud.* Cognitive Poetics has been transforming tremendously to explore different possibilities from many perspectives. As the present analysis is not final argument regarding the stylistic analyses of these poems, the advanced learners may exploit the critical appreciation of these poems further. As David Seamon explored the link of person and environment and advocated the environmental education in the early childhood, the direct application of environmental awareness and its positive impact on person's imagination and creative faculty to be considered (Seamon 1984). Durrant (1962) also studied the poem Daffodils in the light of Wordsworth's biographical scenario of the time. The music, philosophy, nature, and imagination are discussed in relation to the poem *Daffodils.*

After the demonstration of analyses, we briefly discuss about the deliberation in the teaching-learning situation.

The Role of the Teacher

Teachers are facilitators in the classroom. They enable students to understand the literary text. In the present context, the literary text is a poem. They guide students to pay attention to the different aspects of the poetic composition. Teachers make students to engage in different tasks and encourages them to spend more time with the given text.

Relevance of the Tasks

We learn the most by doing the things. Students enjoy the tasks. They involve more in the activities. Passive listening becomes monotonous to the students in the class.

During the activities, students listen, read, and discuss. They use paper and pencil (or pen). They collaborate with their peers. They imagine. They use digital skills for word

search, their meanings and their usage. They also make use of presentation skills. They compare the things. They ask doubts (or queries) to the teachers.

Teachers help students to develop their critical thinking. They unfold the theme(s) along with different interpretations of the poem. They talk about the text and beyond the text. They also find opportunities to explore capabilities of the students. Most importantly, teachers relate the things with the life.

Next, we discuss some sample tasks while teaching these poems.

Sample Tasks

The following are some of the tasks that teachers can assign to the students while teaching the poems. These may not be applicable to other types of poems. Teachers can modify the tasks accordingly. We are considering the above poems while discussing the following tasks. These are just sample tasks. Teachers can add, modify, replace, change the sequence of the tasks according to their objectives and the time available to them.

Task 1:   Ask students to read the given poem on their own.
                (Teachers should provide them handouts or ask them to bring the printed version of the poem with them).

Task 2:   Ask them to identify the rhyme scheme of the poem.
                (Teachers should firstly acquaint them with the different rhymes. They should demonstrate them how to identify the rhymes).

Task 3:   Ask them to identify the word categories such as Nouns, Adjectives, Verbs, Adverbs, Prepositions, etc.
                (Teachers can ask further to explain their relevance in the poem.

Task 4:   Ask them to differentiate the poetic language from the ordinary language by citing examples from the poem under study (Teachers should explain the features of ordinary and poetic language by giving a few examples).

Task 5: Ask them to search meaning of the difficult words by using google search.

(Teacher should demonstrate them how to use search queries in the search-bar like google, for example, *define jocund* or *jocund meaning*.

Task 6: Ask them to complete the metrical analysis of the remaining poem.

(Teachers should introduce them with the concept of meter, the basic metrical patterns such as *iamb, trochee, anapest, dactyl, pyrrhic,* and *spondee*. The occurrence of them in the poetic line, such as *mono-, di-, tri-, tetra-*, etc. Teachers should analyze the sample line for the students).

Task 7: Ask them to discuss with their peers.

(Divide students into small groups and ask them to discuss the different aspects of the poem).

Task 8: Ask them to make presentation on the given poem.

(Teachers should give feedback after the presentation and guide them to improve further).

Thus, these activities along with teachers' timely interventions become an intellectual feast and memorable experience to the students. It also becomes a rewarding experience for the teachers.

===

References

Abrams, M. H. and Geoffrey Harpham. 2009. *A Handbook of Literary Terms.* New Delhi: Cengage Learning India Private Limited.

Burno, Agnes. 1974. *Toward a Quantitative Methodology for Stylistic Analysis.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

===

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 24:7 July 2024
Arvind Jadhav
Teaching Romantic Poetry: Experiment and Experience   42

Byron, Lord. 1815. 'She Walks in Beauty' in Moore et al. 1841, pp.254. Paris: A. and W. Galignani & Company (Digitized by Google from English Faculty Library, University of Oxford).

Day, Aidan. 2012 [1996]. *Romanticism, 2nd edition.* London and New York: Routledge.

Durrant, G. H. 1962. Imagination and Life – "The Daffodils". *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory.* No. 19. 1-9.

Jones, Daniel. 2006[1917]. *Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary*. 17th Edition. Singapore: Times Graphics.

Leech, Geoffrey. 1969. *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry.* London: Longman Group Ltd.

McGann, Jerome. 1999. 'Byron and Wordsworth'. *The Annual Byron Lecture (Electronic Edition) edited by Nicola Bowring.* Nottingham: School of English Studies, University of Nottingham.

Seamon, David. 1984. Emotional Experience of the Environment. *American Behavioural Scientist.* 27(6). Pp. 757-770

Steen, Gerard. 1999. 'Analysing Metaphor in Literature: With examples from William Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"'. *Poetics Today.* 20(3). 499-522.

Wordsworth, William. 1804. 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' in Edward Moxon (ed), *The Poems of William Wordsworth,* New Edition, 1847, Pp. 144 – 145. London: Dover Street (Digitized by Google from Harvard College Library).

Dr. Arvind Jadhav, M.A. & UGC-NET (English), M.A. & UGC-NET (Linguistics), Ph.D. (Linguistics)

Associate Professor of English

Yashwantrao Chavan College of Science

Karad, Maharashtra, India. 415124.

arvind.linguistics@gmail.com