

Levity, an Eccentric Form in Modern Poetry, Unveils Confused Emotion and the Absence of Central Religion

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ABSTRACT

It is widely acknowledged that the inherent component of emotional episodes and modern points of interest lies with the theory of the 'unconscious' state of mind and its influences on human nature. Contemporary poems portray the dilemma of the age in minute analysis of moral & spiritual ailments of lost & misdirected individuals and their anxieties. The objective of the essay is to demonstrate

the nature and quality of the mind the poets portrayed. The modern era is a period of disintegration and interrogation following the choice between different ideas and philosophy, religion and science, capitalism, and socialism. And the artifice, levity, is a suitable instrument employed to propagate the complexities and intricacies of contemporary Western urban life to favor the variety of literary techniques such as intertextuality, allusion, juxtaposition, discontinuity, fragmentation, self-consciousness, ambiguity, and emphasis on de-structured subjectivity. Our purpose is to mark the quest of poets to exhibit poor fascination of mind unable to face challenges of the existing world resulting from a lack of spiritual accomplishment or weakening religious consciousness followed by the rise of frivolous persuasion, an improvised task that modern poets endeavored.

Keywords: Levity, Eccentric Form, Modern Poetry, Confused Emotion, Central Religion

INTRODUCTION

A poet is regarded as a zeitgeist and is as much a product of his society as his reaction to life. The time spirit, the modern also, is the total outcome of the quintessential accretion of all the political, social, religious, and scientific changes of a particular age. Feelings, desires, cognitions, reasoning, decisions, and likes or dislikes are the phenomena of the emotional impact of poetic language associated with aesthetic pleasure, which lies at the heart of human motivation, and modern poets ignore their intensity. Every definite image in mind is stopped and dyed within the mixture of levity and seriousness; the poem's moods are submissive if we cannot say reluctant or lamenting, an activity to the point of enforced release from pain. Juxtaposition and incongruous images from serious popular art used in modern poems express emotions or states of mind; they are an exaggeration and often explode into gentle ridicule, reflecting the broken spirit of the modern age. It implies the

historical aspects of literature; therefore, minor or unimportant though it may be for aesthetic purposes, cannot be ignored. People constantly fail to measure the superior object of life while passing away their life. This age is also mainly known for its clash between morality and principle, ethics and immortality, lack of conviction, and absence of integrity.

The general trend of poetry in this chaotic era is to reveal psychological and spiritual crises, disorganized reactions, and the effects gathered from the decline of central religion and uncertainty of human vision in Europe. A discursive analysis of the modern poets would be helpful to grab and understand a world-built high-rise depending on barren land. Several other intellectual movements and theories influenced art and culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Symbolist movement, dramatic representation of the poems, and opposing ideas or views also impress the style and imagery to construct an irregular flow of feelings.

MEANING OF LEVITY AND RELIGION

According to Britannica (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica), religion applies to human beings and is concerned with some abstract ideas, including spirituality. Generally, religion is a set of rituals having belief while worshipping God. Languages Dictionary (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries) defines religion with traditions concerning faith means trust. It deals with complete trust or confidence in someone or something that enhances spirituality associated with the idea of the soul. Spirituality is the driving force in the position of the soul regarding emotion, feeling, and character beyond the physical world and materialistic inclinations. So, accordingly, the major purpose of central religions is to bring complete reliance beyond worldly proof, estimation, and dependency.

T.S. Eliot: For the essay, the poem, '*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*,' would better serve as a gateway to discuss 'Levity' as it is very clearly noticeable here. Moreover, the contemporaries of Eliot, like Louis MacNeice, C. Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, and Auden, show the influence of the style and imagery of this poem. The ultimate experience and object of knowledge in result in inertia appear from the very beginning of the poem.

Let us go then, you and I,

When the evening is spread out against the sky

Like a patient etherized upon a table; (1-3)

An image like a patient etherized upon a table depicts stifled condition following crises of human relation and have become the common stock in trade of succeeding poets like John Middleton Murry and W H Auden. The women of the poem can quickly and randomly discuss 'Michelangelo,' the artist who expressed the tragic experience of humanity with the most incredible depth, and that universal scope turns ridiculous, suggesting a lack of judgment.

In the room, the woman comes and go

Talking of Michelangelo. (13-14)

Their frequent quoting of Michelangelo implies not admiration but rather a negation, being unable to reconcile or sustain the appeal of the art and having no effect on Prufrock's stagnant mind. The severe anxiety of the protagonist regarding the implementation of his dream ultimately compels him to 'have measured out' his life 'with coffee spoons' simply by altering his perceptions.

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons; (51)

The protagonist fails to comprehend any further meaning of his regularly accomplished activities as a lack of spiritual uplift limits his life within the materialistic surface. The poem, *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*, quickly shifts from one point to another with several abrupt breaks suggesting the emotional block of its hero. However, the poem's title tells us of a love song, a severe urge, interestingly, no longer a song sung in the real world.

It is told that poetry as meaning is neither plain sense nor nonsense but a form of imaginative mind. But neither an emotional nor a musical effect, if it is such, can be found in coherence (Pound, 1934, p139). His love song is the song of a being, divided between passion and timidity, and develops a theme of frustration and emotional conflict. Evening likened to a patient etherized upon a table' is not a logical inference but an association or an intuition deriving from a vigorous state; it tells us more about the perceiver than the object of perception. The song was also not sung in the real world as he was a hero of an unreal world.

In an international journal, *Criterion* (Mandal & Modak, 2013), Prufrock, the central character by T S Eliot in the poem, is shown as a postmodern hero having all his faults. It is the tale of Prufrock's two selves. 'He becomes happy and delighted when one of his selves remains in trance-his short-lived escapism from reality.....At the same time, he becomes pain struck..... as one of his self cannot face the real world.' He is such an unreal hero who is unable to get sight of the exciting world. Thus it is widely acknowledged that modern poetry is complicated with false or affected simplicity, a facetious knack to describe a particular crisis.

In addition, his famous poem, *The Waste Land*, is highly occupied with these aspects and begins introducing April, producing a dual significance.

April is the cruelest month, breeding,

Lilac out of dead land (1-2)

It tells of the intricate thoughts embodying the ramifications of social, cultural, and religious fabrics in human civilization. The fundamental attitude towards vegetation (renewal of life in April) is reversed in life in death or death in life. Death is the ultimate meaning to a man in the poem—the poet finds but ends paradoxically with a benediction, 'Shantih,' conveying the sense (let there be)peace.

Shantih Shantih Shantih (434)

Interestingly this line is placed with 'Hieronymo's mad engine,' a literary reference from Spanish Tragedy by W. Shakespeare is a description of 'feigned madness.' Elinor Waylie compares Eliot's power of suggesting intolerable tragedy at the heart of the trivial or the sordid with a skill little less than miraculous. Pronouncing 'Shantih' three times is instead a frantic expression of profound despair, not a confident emergence by Eliot. Again, the significance of that benediction in *Waste Land* is metaphorically told, similar to the story of Child Roland's evil ground, which is tragic but also comical.

Slug Horn: At the end of Browning's poem, Rolan blows his 'slug-horn.' The word is, in fact, an early form of the word 'slogan,' but Browning uses it as if it means trumpet. In any case, the blowing of it is supposed to be a doomed, romantic gesture (Browning, 1855).

He depicts the poet as absorbed in seriousness but fanatically earnest, comparing his formal ending with slug-horn to his lips blown once or twice and even more in a dark tower of evil land and to them who are fool by their heart and thus the blowing of the slug-horn is a trumpet is the announcement of doom of the civilization, a Waste Land (Eliot, 2022).

People are not aware of their emotions, and life becomes spellbound by machine-oriented policy described in different characters of the dwellers of the cosmopolitan city of London in the poem. Industrialization turned the world alien with an unrestrained tendency to worldly gain, followed by the decline of the central religion, which is responsible for his age's dominant anxieties and feelings in *The Waste Land*. The story of 'Madame Sosostris, a famous clairvoyant' narrates her influence and importance over people for her extraordinary knowledge and foresight.

Had a bad cold. Nevertheless

'Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,

With a wicked pack of cards (44-46).

On the other hand, the way of representation of the fortune teller convinces us not to trust her with her 'bad cold' (indicating her inability) and 'wicked cards.' The contrast between the original use of Tarot cards and the use made by Madam Sosostris herself needs to be revised.

The ironic contrasts in the poem are depictions of frivolous feelings arising as symptoms of the seriously fallen spirit of the people of Europe. People fix their gaze on an unknowable future while forgetting the wisdom of the past. In culmination, the sarcasm and mocking convert a taunting, the audience feels, from flippancy and levity the poet familiarizes.

W. B. Yeats: Another major poet of the era, W B Yeats, is also regarded as an ambitious critic of modern life by Enoch Brater (Brater, 1975). His representation of the spirit of life with the spirit of loss is paradoxical. His renowned poem '*The Second Coming*' propagates 'anarchy' (line 4), which is loosed upon the world and is juxtaposed with the mystical image of the second coming – 'an indeed revelation at and stages a peculiar blending of real with supernatural. Again, in the story of the poem '*Leda and the Swan*,' violence begets bizarre knowledge and is also one of Yeats's commonly relevant.

The poem '*Sailing to Byzantium*' results from a tension between memory and desire, knowledge and intuition, and nature and history. The final stanza implies a contrast between a real bird and a bird. GoldenGolden employs a synthesis of a supernatural approach to spirituality to justify an old man's existence and eternal (unageing) 'intellect,' which is unlike modern chaotic times.

Caught in that sensual music, all neglect

Monuments of unageing intellect. (Lines 7-8)

The poet is compelled to enter an unnatural world as the visible religious strain in society lacks the potential to face the challenges and comfort the distressed heart. Again uses of his occult study have turned into a complex system of spirituality is an unusual experiment to fuel the quest for recovery and return from spiritual barrenness. He constantly juxtaposes opposites; he chooses idealism or materialism and answers his questions; Yeats chooses both and neither. Sometimes they seem emotionally incoherent. D S Savage observes that the development revealed in Yeats's work is a 'development in a vacuum'; he hints at the

absence of a unifying moral subject in his poetry (Bharadwaj, 2018). So, the loss of essential vital principles is felt in the poems, and the strange atypical situation denotes the urges for spirituality in a limited narrower world.

W H Auden: We would like to focus on the other modern representative poet W H Auden and his renowned poem '*In Memory of W B Yeats*.' As its title indicates, the verse is an elegy written to mourn the death of W B Yeats, but it is different from a conventional elegy, a technic better reflects the distinctiveness of its time. Traditionally, in an elegy, nature is characterized as mourning death, whereas nature here goes on its course indifferent and unaffected. It implies a need for a real commitment to the feeling of artificiality, which is evident in the concluding part of the poem.

An interesting remark made by Auden to his friend Stephen Spender informs us of his respect and his being unable to be respectful: "I am incapable of saying a word about Yeats because, though no fault of his, he has become for me a symbol of my devil of authenticity, of everything which I must try to eliminate from my poetry, false emotions, inflated rhetoric, empty sonorities." And last part of the poem shows plenty of evidence of those 'false emotions' (Osborne, 1980).

It is a sense of ridiculousness compared to something that could have been so spectacular. A similar attitude, the juxtaposition of the ordinary and extraordinary, is available in his poem *Spain* and *Musee des Beaux-Arts*.

The sun shone

As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green

Water... (Line 17-19)

If not suggestive, the language of these lines from *Musee des Beaux-Arts* could have been more natural. We notice the ordinariness of the language, like—the ship 'had somewhere to get to' (line 21) and 'the dog go on with their doggy life' (line 12). While death is being meted out horrifically, we see 'torturer's horse' (line 12).

There is a general air of casualness that the poet attempts to convey, too, through the conversational meter he employs. Ultimately it is a careless exposure of a very concerned issue—an indifferent trick to describe a human's lot of sorrow with endurance and, in culmination, discovering the emotional block from where these notions originated.

In '*Shield of Achilles*,' phrases like 'multitude' and 'million eyes' are placed with 'unintelligible' and 'without expression,' implying and depicting characteristics of people having absolute conformity but lack initiative.

An unintelligible multitude,

A million eyes, a million boots in line,

Without expression, waiting for a sign. (13-15)

In stanza six, the choice of words 'mass and majesty' creates a sense of importance and weightiness; the simple use of alternative repetition adds to a sense of impressiveness. Still, the lines have a sweeping effect that helps to 'carry' the 'weight.'

The mass and majesty of this world, all

That carries weight and always weigh the same (line 38-39)

So, the ultimate implication of the poem is the meaninglessness of contemporary life without faith. Double-edged irony, juxtaposition, and parallelism with metaphoric imagination turn the Homeric legend befitting analogy to the post-war civilization. The scenes depicted on the shield would have been heroic in the original story, but Auden has adopted an anti-heroic stance here. His mentioning of the influence of statistics and their uses to demonstrate some truth are also found in his other poems like *The Unknown Citizen*. The function of the statistics turns to reverse what is described, and the experience appears comical but grievous to the readers.

CONCLUSION

The courses of modern poetry are thoroughly alive with the insurmountable pressure of the time on the one hand and the necessity of an integrating principle like love or faith on the other. The poets compose their verses on the position of human beings amid great passionate perplexity, and we experience a mixture of levity with seriousness in a world of uncertainty. Silliness is placed with high severity and interprets man's inner dilemmas emphasizing the multi-dimensional approaches but ignoring them, a repeated quest for relief.

Despite the influences of science and rationalism, it cannot deny an equal urge for religion and mysticism. Despite its stark realism in theme and treatment, there run veins of romanticism. Impacts of cinematography, music, sculpture, painting, and fine arts on poetry and uses of symbolism often result in ambiguity, obscurity, and as demanded. Moreover, Communism and Freudianism have an imaginative appeal to the people not merely as a dialect but as a way out of the generation's prevailing frustration, degeneration, and disillusionment. Similarly, the validity of their religious poetry makes us feel the peculiar position of a man in an age of disbelieving better than we can do.

Human enchantment falls under the spell of materialistic dreams through the influence of commerce and technology with industrialization. Modern men are depicted fulfilling their arranged sensual pleasures forgetting feelings of sensibility. Machine and methodological orientation limit human identity becoming the forces responsible for their narrower objectives in life. Desires are abundant but calculative fail to bring further meaning. Structured repetitive rituals are factors for life's monotony and horror without superior goals. Thus actions turn neglectful, and we confront levity or hollowness, indicating a loss of sensibility and poor impacts of central religion on a man in modern poems.

A dual representation of the state of a man unveils the symptoms of a patient, and we grasp the lamentation of modern man for a civilization that has lost the spirit of its soul. It expresses concern with the development and decline of feelings in modern man. Lack of gravity and superficiality drive the poets to be able to see beneath both beauty and ugliness, to see boredom and horror vision. The tendency of reorientation and reversal enables these representative poets to express the theme of religious frustration. Modes of intuition are made intelligible by the poem and become subject to inference. There are uses of ironic contrasts between the glorious past and the sordid present. In reality, applying the principle of complexity and surface parallelism makes ironic contrasts. Two aspects combined give the effect of a chaotic experience ordered into a new hole. The poets leave grammatical signs, connections, and transitions, omitting grammatical sense but preserving poetic and psychological symptoms. It is a dissection of a modern heart disclosing human passion, a misfit in his world.

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