



# **ENG 111**

## **Introduction to Poetry**

### Course Manual

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# **Introduction to Poetry**

**ENG111**



University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre  
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## Vice-Chancellor's Message

The Distance Learning Centre is building on a solid tradition of over two decades of service in the provision of External Studies Programme and now Distance Learning Education in Nigeria and beyond. The Distance Learning mode to which we are committed is providing access to many deserving Nigerians in having access to higher education especially those who by the nature of their engagement do not have the luxury of full time education. Recently, it is contributing in no small measure to providing places for teeming Nigerian youths who for one reason or the other could not get admission into the conventional universities.

These course materials have been written by writers specially trained in ODL course delivery. The writers have made great efforts to provide up to date information, knowledge and skills in the different disciplines and ensure that the materials are user-friendly.

In addition to provision of course materials in print and e-format, a lot of Information Technology input has also gone into the deployment of course materials. Most of them can be downloaded from the DLC website and are available in audio format which you can also download into your mobile phones, iPod, MP3 among other devices to allow you listen to the audio study sessions. Some of the study session materials have been scripted and are being broadcast on the university's Diamond Radio FM 101.1, while others have been delivered and captured in audio-visual format in a classroom environment for use by our students. Detailed information on availability and access is available on the website. We will continue in our efforts to provide and review course materials for our courses.

However, for you to take advantage of these formats, you will need to improve on your I.T. skills and develop requisite distance learning Culture. It is well known that, for efficient and effective provision of Distance learning education, availability of appropriate and relevant course materials is a *sine qua non*. So also, is the availability of multiple platform for the convenience of our students. It is in fulfillment of this, that series of course materials are being written to enable our students study at their own pace and convenience.

It is our hope that you will put these course materials to the best use.



Prof. Isaac Adewole  
Vice-Chancellor

# Foreword

As part of its vision of providing education for “Liberty and Development” for Nigerians and the International Community, the University of Ibadan, Distance Learning Centre has recently embarked on a vigorous repositioning agenda which aimed at embracing a holistic and all encompassing approach to the delivery of its Open Distance Learning (ODL) programmes. Thus we are committed to global best practices in distance learning provision. Apart from providing an efficient administrative and academic support for our students, we are committed to providing educational resource materials for the use of our students. We are convinced that, without an up-to-date, learner-friendly and distance learning compliant course materials, there cannot be any basis to lay claim to being a provider of distance learning education. Indeed, availability of appropriate course materials in multiple formats is the hub of any distance learning provision worldwide.

In view of the above, we are vigorously pursuing as a matter of priority, the provision of credible, learner-friendly and interactive course materials for all our courses. We commissioned the authoring of, and review of course materials to teams of experts and their outputs were subjected to rigorous peer review to ensure standard. The approach not only emphasizes cognitive knowledge, but also skills and humane values which are at the core of education, even in an ICT age.

The development of the materials which is on-going also had input from experienced editors and illustrators who have ensured that they are accurate, current and learner-friendly. They are specially written with distance learners in mind. This is very important because, distance learning involves non-residential students who can often feel isolated from the community of learners.

It is important to note that, for a distance learner to excel there is the need to source and read relevant materials apart from this course material. Therefore, adequate supplementary reading materials as well as other information sources are suggested in the course materials.

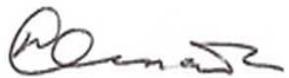
Apart from the responsibility for you to read this course material with others, you are also advised to seek assistance from your course facilitators especially academic advisors during your study even before the interactive session which is by design for revision. Your academic advisors will assist you using convenient technology including Google Hang Out, You Tube, Talk Fusion, etc. but you have to take advantage of these. It is also going to be of immense advantage if you complete assignments as at when due so as to have necessary feedbacks as a guide.

The implication of the above is that, a distance learner has a responsibility to develop requisite distance learning culture which includes diligent and disciplined self-study, seeking available administrative and academic support and acquisition of basic information technology skills. This is why you are encouraged to develop your computer skills by availing yourself the opportunity of training that the Centre's provide and put these into use.

In conclusion, it is envisaged that the course materials would also be useful for the regular students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria who are faced with a dearth of high quality textbooks. We are therefore, delighted to present these titles to both our distance learning students and the university's regular students. We are confident that the materials will be an invaluable resource to all.

We would like to thank all our authors, reviewers and production staff for the high quality of work.

Best wishes.



Professor Bayo Okunade  
Director

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## Welcome to ENG 111: Introduction to Poetry

This course informs students on the general background and possible sources, as well as the distinguishing features and forms of poetry. The course continues in 200 level in ENG212 where focus is on major movements and traditions in English Poetry.

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# **Study Session 1**

## **Nature and Origin of Poetry**

### **Introduction**

In this study session you will be introduced to various definitions of poetry, which will give you immense insight into the nature of poetry. After that, you will be shown possible origins of poetry. You will also study about the distinguishing characteristics of poetry, certain elements a poem must possess, alongside practical ways you can successfully appreciate a poem.

### **Learning Outcomes for Study Session 1**

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- 1.1 create your own definition of poetry.
- 1.2 discuss the origin of poetry.

### **1.1 What Poetry is**

Let me begin with a part-quotation from one of the many existing definitions of poetry, this time, by a famous English poet and critic, William Wordsworth. He defined poetry as a “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.” The uniqueness of human experience is largely responsible for the often controversial responses or reactions to poetry. What should be of concern to you as a student of poetry or me as a teacher of poetry, however, is the dimension of the controversy and its effect on both students and teachers of poetry.

#### **1.1.1 Definitions of Poetry**

Poetry means different things to different people. Carefully study the following excerpts from different attempts by some great poets and critics at the definition of poetry. They certainly will explain further the import of this statement. Poetry is:

- i) “the power to define the undefinable in terms of the unforgettable.” Louis Untermeyer and Carter Davidson in *Poetry: Its appreciation and Enjoyment*(New York, 1934), p.9.
- ii) “the music of the soul, and above all of great and of feeling souls. One merit of poetry few persons will deny: it says more in fewer words than prose.” Voltaire, in “Poets,” a Philosophical dictionary, trans. William F. Fleming (New York, 1901), p.218
- iii) “simply the art of electrifying language with extraordinary meaning.” Lascelles Abercrombie, *The Theory of Poetry* (New York, 1926), p.93
- iv) “simply the most beautiful, impressive, and widely effective mode of saying things.” Matthew Arnold, “Heinrich Hein,” Essays in Criticism: first Series (London, 1921)London, 1921), p.161
- v) “Transfiguration, the transfiguration of the actual or the Real into the Ideal, at a lofty elevation, through the medium of melodious or nobly sounding verse.” Alfred Austin, “The Growing Distaste for the Higher Kinds of Poetry,” Fortnightly Review, LXXIV N.S. (March, 1904), p.383

- vi) “a comforting piece of fiction set to more or less lascivious music- a slap on the back in waltz time- a grand release of longing and repressions to the tune of flute, harps, sackbuts, psalteries and the usual strings.” H. L. Mencken, *Prejudices: Third Series* (New York, 1922), p.151
- vii) “the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason.” Samuel Johnson, “John Milton,” *Lives of the English Poets* (London and New York, 1958), I, p.100
- viii) “the lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake.” George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Letters and journals*, III, ed. Rowland E. Prothero (London, 1922), p.405.
- ix) “man’s rebellion against being what he is” James Branch Cabell, *Jurgen* (New York, 1927), p.333
- x) “Poetry comes with anger, hunger and dismay; it does not often visit groups of citizens sitting down to be literary together, and would appal them if it did.” Christopher Morley, *John Mistletoe* (Garden City, New York, 1931), p.55
- xi) “I wish our clever young poets would remember my homely definitions of prose and poetry; that is, prose = words on their best order; poetry = best word in the best order.” Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Table Talk and Omiana of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. T. Ashe (London, 1896), p.54
- xii) “the business of words in prose is primarily to state; in poetry, not only to state, but also (and sometimes primarily) to suggest.” John Livingstone Lowes, *Convention and Revolt in Poetry* (Boston and New York, 1919), p.181
- xiii) “Perhaps no person can be a poet, or can even enjoy poetry, without a certain unsoundness of mind ... By poetry we mean the art of employing word in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination, the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colours.” Thomas Babington Macaulay, “Milton,” *Essays and Biographies* (London, 1906), I, p.7
- xiv) “I could add that in Africa poetry is our very essence, our being and life; it is our day-to-day interaction with one another; it is our music and dance, the prayers of the traumatized, the pain of the pauperized; it is the cries of abandoned babies, the aroma of our cuisine, the birds and their songs, the goats and their bleating, the glamour of our environmental decay, our democracy and its casualties ...” Ademola Dasylva

**Reflection:** The list above is inexhaustible. Can you attempt creating your own definition of poetry?

### 1.1.2 Possible Sources of Poetry

Although it may not be easy in determining how long poetry has existed one may just as well be contented with simply tracing the likely sources that have given birth to poetry in general. Nature possesses distinct orderliness: birth and death; night and day. The sun, the moon and the stars give their natural light or blackout at determined time, pace and space. The planets revolve at a terrific precision around their orbits round the sun. The Earth too rotates on its axis with similar speed and precision, and simultaneously revolves around the sun on its orbit. The orderliness, or the observable

precision I have described above are as real as they are poetic. Naturally, they, in turn, provoke poetry.

**Reflection:** Have you ever witnessed a time that day failed to break, perhaps for forty-eight hours, or that Earth bumped into Mars in its orbit, or that it rains and yet nothing grows, or that reproduction of living things generally stopped?

Similarly, the relationship between man and man (woman); or the interaction between man and nature quite often leads to some experience, or specific human feelings such as, for example, joy, sorrow, laughter, disillusionment, etc. These intense human feelings, when expressed in words, could be poetic. For example, man's interaction with nature gave rise to his acknowledgement of a Supreme Being, or God, or gods and goddesses, believed to be capable of assisting him in any helpless or hopeless situation. That was the beginning of religious worship. In such worship, the greatness, the enduring mercy, the omnipotence and the omniscience of the Supreme Deity are celebrated. This is done with a touch of hyper exaggeration. And over exaggeration is a common feature of poetry. For example, in Yoruba praise worship of the Supreme Deity referred to as *Olorun* (from Olu-Orun, meaning the Ruler/Creator/Owner of the Heavens of heaven), or *Oladumare* (Ruler/Creator/Owner of the universe, to whom I must return) it is in this regard, among others, that God is referred to as:

- *Elétíi gb'áròyé* (He whose ears are meant to receive all complaints). Something close to this is observed in the next example which gives the impression of some Being with a pair of ears the size of a giant satellite dish- a typical over exaggeration: *Elétíi gbòrògòdò* (He whose ears are extremely large).
- *Olówó gbogborogbo* (He who possesses extremely long hands).
- *Ògbàgbà tí n gba ará àdúgbò* (The Deliverer who protects our neighbours).

In the same vein, certain historical figures who were elevated to the pedestal of deities or demi-gods by virtue of what the people believed were unparalleled achievements or contributions to their respective societies have found their ways into indigenous praise poetry and, or heroic chants, and epic poems.

- ITQ Spot exaggeration in this Pentecostal Christian praise song:  
È mà bá mi rábàbà fQoba Ògo                          Prostrate in praise of the King of Glory  
Oba atéreré kárí ayé                                  One whose sprawling size covers the whole earth
- ITA The designation of the Almighty as 'one whose sprawling size covers the whole earth' is clearly an exaggeration.

Man, regardless of his geographical location or colour pigmentation, is naturally an **animist**, and as such tends to react or respond to some natural phenomenon the same way. Some Shakespearian plays, or D.O. Fagunwa's novels, among others, are eloquent testimony in this regard. Although through science and modern technology he has successfully cleared some of the mist, the residue of the old belief in the existence of spirits or supernatural forces is still very much with the indigenous African society. Man's interaction with nature and subsequent awareness of his limitations led to his quest into the possibility of applying metaphysical means, including the power of the spoken word as coping strategy to subdue as well as control some of the nature-elements for the purpose of serving his needs. The metaphysical powers are otherwise called magic. Incantations are imbued with magical potency. Examples of incantatory poetry can be found in, (a) the encounter between Odewale and Oba Adetusa in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame* (III.i.):

ODEWALE.      What are these before my eyes?

What are these before my eyes?  
 Are they mountains or are they trees?  
 They are human beings and not trees.  
 They are human beings and not mountains.  
 For trees have no eyes;  
 Then let these eyes around me close  
 Close, close in sleep, close in sleep.  
 That is my word - the mountain always  
 Sleeps. Sleep...sleep...sleep...  
 Sleep till the sun goes to sleep...

and

(b)

When a strainer takes in water,  
 All the water immediately goes out of it  
 When a wicker fish-trap takes in water,  
 All the water immediately goes out of it.  
 The drake cannot, even in a fit of anger, crow.  
 ...Oriji leaf commands you to forgive me,  
 no matter what I may have done amiss...

(translated by Olabimtan in Senanu & Vincent's *A Selection of African Poetry*, 12)

Poetry in this regard is perceived in the use of over-exaggeration (hyperbole), repetition and anaphora, imagery, use of negative or positive correlates, and rapidity of delivery (in the case of incantation).

In institutional mediation, poetry arises from the effects of social life. For example, songs to celebrate the arrival of a new baby; wedding songs; elegiac songs and dirges to mark the departure to the great beyond of a beloved; religious hymns; chants celebrating courage or mocking human foibles, all handed down, orally, from one generation to another.

Traditional chanters, palace minstrels, (or griots) poets, among others, were at liberty to employ their skills to pull down their society or assist in lifting it up, (see Niyi Osundare's "A Dialogue of the Drum"). Poetry becomes especially localized as an art expressed verbally.

Language, it must be emphasized, is a cultural production. Similarly, poetry subsists in expressed words (spoken or written). By implication, certain developments become perceivable, such as increased capacity for mental retention of poetry; refreshing poetry as a specialized (verbal) art, as well as sophisticating its many aspects. The development of poetry became more enhanced with the arrival of printing technology. One of such areas of development is the separation into *oral* and *written* poetry. Oral poetry still retains its spontaneity and uniqueness. Written poetry now becomes more specialized and formalized; and except in few cases as in Okot p'Bitek's *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol*, Okinba Launko's *Ire and Other Poems for Performance* or Ademola Dasylva's *Songs of Odamolugbe* in which the poets consciously retain the orality, the original aesthetics and form of the indigenous African oral poetry while the topicality engages contemporary issues. An example from Ademola Dasylva's *Songs of Odamolugbe*:

The hoe nips at mother Earth,  
 Like a blowing wind, my mercuric song reveals  
 The naked anus of the fowl feigning god.

*Kange-Kange*, my song from the broken gong,  
Barren of Osundare' pastoral images,  
The untiring Odamolugbe himself;

Lingering lyrics of *Olosunta* yesterlores,  
Wigwagging lores whipping delinquent adults  
Who add salt to our noon sores!

Singers of lore incapable of weaving songs  
Into fighting spirits should observe, learn from  
My master the *Odamolugbe* himself!

A drummer with a drum does not beat his belly instead;  
My song, devoid of Soyinka's verbal smithing,  
The rhythmic stirrup of Ogun metalines ... (p.28)

- ITQ Spot an element of orality in the above poem
- ITA The onomatopoeic word *Kange-kange* mimics the sound of a gong

## 1.2 Poetry Appreciation

The first step in the appreciation of poetry is to learn to read a poem correctly, with every word pronounced correctly, and aloud; if you cannot do this; learn to read it attentively so as to hear the sounds of its words in your inner ear. The second step is to bear in mind always that some poems are simple, some complex, but no good poem yields all its meaning easily, or at once. A good poem has to be read repeatedly before it can be fully appreciated. Note also the following:

- Do not start by worrying about the meaning of a poem.
- Begin by appreciating its sounds, noting the variety of sound repetitions.
- Move on to know the meanings of the words used in the poem, and to determine whether the words have been used denotatively or connotatively.
- Identify the figures of speech, the rhetorical devices used, and their meanings. Then try to determine who the speaker in the poem is, what is his/her situation, and what tone does he/she use.
- Go over the poem again (and again and again and again and...). By this time, a meaning of the poem will have suggested itself to your mind - in fact, you will have arrived at the meaning without realizing it!

### 1.2.1 Distinguishing Characteristics of Poetry

What distinguishes poetry from other forms of literature besides the characteristic economy of words is its exploitation of the resources of *language* and *music*. In other words, the distinguishing features of poetry are both intrinsic. The exploitation is intense, more frequent and more discriminate than we have in other forms of literature.

#### A. Poetry and the Resources of Language

**Diction** Until recent times, the uniqueness of poetry was linked with its specialized use of poetic diction. In the light of this, some words are considered more "poetic" than others, and poets naturally

prefer such poetic words to common place words. We must emphasize, however, that there is a thin difference between the language of prose and that of poetry. A casual reading of the first few pages of Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (a novel) will definitely prove this. What is important is how best words are put to use. A good poet finds the best words to effect the best expression. The tendency, however, is for a poet to prefer a choice of words that are imaginative and more figurative than a writer of, for example, prose fiction. Consider some lines in Okot p'Bitek's "Song of Lawino".

When the sun has grown up  
And the poisoned tips  
Of its arrows painfully bite  
The backs of the men hoeing  
And of the women weeding or harvesting (83)

Or Christopher Okigbo's "Idoto".

BEFORE YOU, mother Idoto  
naked I stand  
before your watery presence,  
a prodigal... ("The Passage", 3)

## 1 Denotation

It is the primary meaning of a word that is called its denotative meaning. For example, "There is a rat in the room." In this context, the animal, rat, is unwanted in the room and may constitute a health hazard.

## 2 Connotation

It refers to the secondary meaning of a word; its symbolic meaning E.g., "*There is a rat in this room.*" At the secondary or symbolic level, the meaning of rat transcends the mere animal. It suggests that a traitor is in the room. The implication is that they must be more careful about what they say or do.

- ITQ Give the denotative meaning and a possible connotative meaning of the following:
  - The pot that desires the taste of soup
  - Must surrender itself to fire(Yoruba proverb)
- ITA Denotative meaning: A pot must be heated before it can contain soup  
Possible connotative meaning: One must endure hardship to be refined, successful, etc.

## 3 Imagery

This is often used interchangeably with figurative language, or figures of speech. It is the concretization of what otherwise could have been a mere abstraction in a way that gives sense experience. Our sense or mental response makes imagery possible. Imagery, therefore, evokes concrete mental images which in turn inform our emotional or intellectual response. We must emphasize too that while imagery makes use of images, not all images qualify as imagery. For example, compare the two statements below:

- (1a) I have been to Bodija market before; it was rowdy and stank terribly.
- (1b) I have been to Bodija market before; it was a ranch of disorderly cattle, the odour hit one right in the face like the fist of some deadly boxer.

In (1a) the statement is straightforward. The image or picture suggested is that of a disorderly and stinking market. In (1b) the statement has not expressed anything less. In addition to this, however,

the statement also evokes some mental pictures that make the speaker's experience more enduring in the mind of his audience:

*The image of disorderliness among a herd of cattle in a ranch* suggests the rowdiness of the people; “a ranch”, in this context, is suggestive of a market that is more suited for animals (cattle) than human beings. “Disorderly cattle” and “ranch” are used metaphorically. Similarly, the stinking odour merely stank in sentence (1a), now assumes the picture of a human being – a boxer the punches of whom are mischievous and deadly. The idea of filthy odour hitting one, is a personification, and since the fist blow is likened to that of a boxer, it is a simile.

Since imagery contributes significantly to poetry, I shall give it further attention under figures of speech in other to help your understanding.

#### **4 Figurative language**

This has to do with some relationship between that which is said and that which is non-literal language. The relationship is at different levels:

##### **(a) Simile**

It involves a physical or emotional similarity made between a given image and what is intended. In other words, it is an expressed comparison between two unlike things in which “like”, or “as”, or any other similar expression is used. I must emphasize however that it is not every statement where “like” or “as” occurs that qualifies as a simile, hence the emphasis on two unlike things (in the subjective or the objective). For example:

- (2a) Olugbenga plays football like Angulu.
- (2b) Anselm plays football like a bull.
- (2c) Kareem is as good as Weah on the football pitch.

In (2a) Olugbenga and Angulu are two-like (similar) personages, therefore, the statement does not qualify for a simile

In (2c) Kareem and George Weah (the Liberian footballer who was declared the World Footballer of the Year 1995/96), are two unlike personages. The international weight of Weah makes it possible for this comparison to be a simile. Similarly, in (2b), Anselm and a bull are two unlike entities hence the statement simply suggests that Anselm is a very rough or aggressive footballer whose manner of playing gives one the mental picture of a bull on the field of play. Therefore, it qualifies as a simile. Other examples of simile are;

- (2d) “Except that like some fish  
Doped out of the deep

#### ***I have bobbed up belly wise***

From stream of sleep  
And no cockcrow... (J. P. Clark, “Night Rain”)

Clark likens a deep sleep to a stream or flowing river. The poet compares the discomfort of his sudden waking from a deep sleep and the attendant fear and surprise, with the shocking fear of a fish caught with a hook or the net, and forcefully drawn out from the deep of the sea, onto an open, waterless space, panting for life. Also in the same poem, “Night Rain”;

- (2e) Great water drops are dribbling  
Falling like orange or mango  
Fruits showered forth in the wind  
Or perhaps I should say so

Much like beads I could in prayer tell

Them on string as they break  
In wooden bowls and earthenware...

The thickness, heaviness or intensity of the rain drops which fall on the rooftop under the impact of powerful wind is likened to the effect of orange or mango fruits dropping, and the regular intervals or pace at which the rain drops drop into “wooden bowls and earthenware,” the poet compares with the pace at which prayers are said on the rosary or the *tesbiyu*.

**Epic Simile** is a type of simile. However, unlike normal or usual simile, the reference is not only drawn from classical events, figures, elements, etc., but forms a good basis for digression(s), giving detailed information (clarification) about the referent. For example, John Milton draws a parallel similarity between the striking beauty of Eve (immediately after leaving Adam's side to work separately) and that of a Greek goddess.

“...Thus saying, from her husband's hand her hand  
Soft she withdrew, and like a wood-nymph light,  
Dread or Dryad, or of Delia's train,  
Betook her to the groves, but Delia's self,  
In gait surpassed and goddess-like deport,  
Though not as she with bow and quiver armed,  
But with such gardening tools as art yet rude  
- Guiltless of fire – had formed, or angels brought...”

(John Milton, “Paradise Lost” IX: 385)

### (b) Metaphor

In this case the comparison between the two unlike things are implied. Remember that in simile, it is an expressed comparison; in metaphor it is an implied or compressed comparison. Often it is difficult to recognize a metaphor. For example;

- 3 (a) Chigozie is a bull on the field (metaphor)
- (b) Olusegun plays football like a bull (simile)
- 4 (a) The angry man *butchered* his helpless wife (metaphor)
- (b) The angry man killed his helpless wife as one butchers a cow      (simile)

No doubt, the example given in (3a) may appear quite unusual since the most common ones are derived from nouns, for example “a bull”, etc., however, the verb “butchered”, no doubt, is a verb that conjures a mental picture of an abattoir scene where a butcher runs his knife through the throat of a cow, and finally cuts the cow into pieces.

**Extended Metaphor** is a reference that involves not only a one-to-one comparison, but which provide for the purpose of clarification, provides more information about the referent, e.g:

“...But it's a common proof,  
That lowness is young ambition's ladder,  
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;  
But when he once attains the upmost round,  
He then unto the ladder turns his back,

### *Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees*

By which he did ascend.

(W. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, II.i)

#### **(c) Personification**

In this literary device, human attributes are given to abstractions, inanimate objects and non-human beings. In other words, it is transferring personal qualities to a non-person. It is, therefore, a misapplication of term to talk of personification where real living human characters are the points of reference. This is so because human characters are understandably persons already. However, where or when a poet chooses to give anything other than a living person the attribute(s) of a human being, he makes a person of it. That is personification. Very close to personification is apostrophe. Examples of personification:

5. (i) "The cold and monstrous hands of Death snatched my love."
- (ii) The trees in the forest opened their boughs attentively to our tired helpless wailing.
- (iii) "In those days  
When **civilization** kicked us in the face  
When **holy water** slapped our cringing *brows*"  
(our emphasis)  
(David Diop, "The Vultures", lines 1-3)

"Civilization", "holy water", and "brows" are personified in the above examples.

- (iv) "The ripest fruit was saddest,"  
(W. Soyinka, "Abiku" line 29)
- (v) "O, **Conspiracy** seek not to hide your face" (*Julius Caesar*: Brutus, addressing the conspirators in one their nocturnal meetings)
- (vi) "**Love** is gentle, meek and kind  
**Love** does not loath to anger". (I Cor. 13:4-8)

#### **(d) Apostrophe**

In apostrophe a character, or the poetic voice (persona) addresses directly an inanimate object, or an abstraction as one would a living human being. The direct address could be to a dead person (as Antoni addresses the body of Julius Caesar in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*):

- (i) Antoni: O mighty Caesar! Dost thou lie so low?  
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,  
Shrunk to this little measure? Fare thee well.
- (ii) Antoni: O! pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,  
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers;  
Thou art the ruins of the noblest man  
That ever lived in the tide of times.  
Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!  
Over thy wounds now do I prophesy,  
Which like dumb mouths do open their ruby lips,

To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue, ...  
(W. Shakespeare: *Julius Caesar*)

or the biblical David to the slain bodies of Jonathan and King Saul) as if they were alive:  
Excerpt from *Lament of the bow* by King David;

Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights.  
How the mighty have fallen!  
Tell it not in Gath,  
Proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon,  
Lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad,  
    Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice...  
How the mighty have fallen in battle!  
    Jonathan lies slain on your heights.  
I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother;  
You were very dear to me.  
Your love for me was wonderful,  
    More wonderful than that of women  
How the mighty have fallen!  
    The weapons of war have perished!"

(II Sam. 1:19-20, 25-27, NIV Topical Study Bible, p. 324)

Such addresses may also be directed to someone who is not at the scene of an event but addressed as if he were present.

#### **(e) Allusion**

This is an implicit or explicit reference to persons, places, things or events, with historical or mythological significance. It can be reference drawn from the Bible, the Qu'ran, the Ifa corpus, or any classical literature of a given culture: Greek, Oriental, African, etc. Allusion can be considered on three levels:

- (i) Classical allusion: a reference to person, place, thing or an event in the ancient classical Greek, oriental or African culture. e.g.
  - (a) "You are the Helen causing the cities in my head to be at war with passion. (Reference is made to Helen, the classical beauty Queen that was said to be the cause of the sporadic wars between the Greek and the Trojans. The two cities (Greece and Troy), had contested for the possession of the controversial Queen.)
  - (b) "Like the seven children of the legendary Oduduwa, your princes have launched out to found new literary kingdoms for themselves." A reference to Oduduwa and his seven children. Oduduwa is believed to be the father of the Yoruba race. His seven children were believed to have founded seven notable Yoruba towns.
- (ii) Historical allusion: reference to person, place, thing, or an event in the contemporary history, for example;
  - (a) If General Abacha's rule was characterized by a *Tsunami* of extra judicial killings, President of Obasanjo's eight years of democratic rule revealed a country submerged under a *Katrina* of institutionalized corruption in high places. (relevant to contemporary Nigerian political development). Can you suggest other relevant examples?

- (iii) Biblical/Qu'ranic allusion: reference to person, place, thing or an event in either the Bible or the Qu'ran. Can you identify any such allusion in the passage below?

“...most African countries today constitute the modern Babylon. The deluge of poverty drowns and drags away the people into perdition, leaving a few self-seeking opportunists in the Ark, afloat.”(A.O. Dasylla, “A rudderless State-ship”).

#### **(f) Apposition**

It is an additional statement or word(s) to a preceding word, for the purpose of clarification or explanation. E.g.:

- (i) “...Mother has dipped three fingers  
three fingers of her left hand:  
thumb, forefinger and middle finger  
I have dipped three fingers  
three fingers of my right hand  
thumb, forefinger and middle finger.”  
(our emphasis)  
(Birago Diop, “Viaticum” lines 7-12)

The idea of “three fingers” is given further clarification in “thumb, forefinger and middle fingers.”

- (ii) “The great fall through the Adamic experience has earned man, among other things, sickness: Death's harbinger.”

\* “Death's harbinger” (i.e. messenger of Death) is in apposition to “sickness”.

#### **(g) Metonymy**

This is a figure of speech in which the poet substitutes the subject, profession, or person with an object closely associated with what is substituted e.g. “the King” can be substituted with “the crown”, the labour(er) with spade; writer with pen, soldier with gun, lady with skirt, etc., for example;

The English archery  
Struck the French horses  
(Drayton, “The Ballad of Agincourt”).

#### **(h) Synecdoche**

This is a form of metaphor in which the poet uses a part to represent a whole of the referent. The choice of the part of referent must be the most important part if the synecdoche is to be effective. E.g.

- (i) “all hands are on deck” meaning “everybody is at work”, (ii) “We shall need more hands as the work progresses”, meaning, “More people shall be needed as the work progresses.”

- (iii) Blind mouths! That scare themselves  
Know how to hold.  
A sheep hook, or have learned aught else  
The lease...  
(John Milton, “Lycidas”).

#### **(i) Symbols/Images/Allegory**

These are sometimes difficult to distinguish. The word “image” often suggests a mental picture, that is, something perceived in the mind's “eye”. An image, on a more general note, is what it exactly is.

##### **(i) Symbols**

A symbol is something other than what it states or shows. It operates on two levels; that which is the symbol, and that which it represents.

White (as in colour): purity, or innocence, or death (as in ghost, or a shroud)

Red (as in colour): danger, or sacrifice, or victory (as in the Blood of Jesus Christ)

Green (as in colour): a rich vegetation, or naivety or ignorance, or inexperience.

Lamb: innocence, purity

Sheep: ignorance, foolishness, stupidity.

#### (ii) **Allegory**

An allegory is a narrative or descriptive poem which has a secondary or symbolic meaning besides the primary or literal meaning. The emphasis in this case, is usually on the ulterior, symbolic or literary (secondary) meaning. It is not common in short poems but in long narrative poems, e.g. “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, by S.T. Coleridge, “Faerie Queen” by Edmund Spenser, and “*Paradise Lost*” by John Milton.

#### (j) **Oxymoron**

It is a figure of speech in which a poet places two contrasting words side by side to suggest an idea that seems contradictory e.g. “Bitter-sweet” or as in Coleridge’s “The nightmare Life-in-death was she” (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*)

#### (k) **Antithesis**

It is a figure of speech in which a poet uses a sentence or a paragraph, words or ideas of expression that are contrasting. The difference between this and oxymoron is in the fact that while oxymoron involves contrasting words placed side by side, antithesis does not place contrasting words or ideas side by side, for example;

- (i)       “To live, you must die first”,
- (ii)      “What goes up must come down.”

#### (l) **Paradox**

This can be likened to “truth standing on its head.” It is a strange truth. This strangeness resides in the statement’s apparent contradiction which contains (some) seminal truth when carefully analyzed, for example;

- (i)       “A child is the father of the man,”
- (ii)      “A child is a man in small letters.”

#### (m) **Understatement**

It is a figure of speech in which the poet appears to say or state far less than he actually means, or where the poet chooses to say what he means with far less a force than expected, for example;

The grave's a fine and private place  
But none, I think, do there embrace.  
(Andrew Marvell “To His Coy Mistress”).

#### (n) **Hyperbole/Exaggeration/Overstatement**

They all refer to a figure of speech in which the poet uses deliberate exaggeration without the intent of literal persuasion. A poet uses hyperbole with the aim of heightening effect, for example;

Had we but World enough, and Time...I would  
Love you ten years before the Flood:  
Thine Eyes, and on thy Forehead Gaze.  
Two hundred to adore each Breast:  
But thirty thousand to the rest  
An age at least to every part,  
Nor would I love at lower rate.  
(Andrew Marvell "To His Coy Mistress").

### **(o) Irony**

It is a situation or a use of language, involving some incongruity or discrepancy. There are different types of irony. These include:

- (i) Verbal irony: this is saying the opposite of what one means;
- (ii) Dramatic irony: here, the poet/playwright implies a different meaning from that intended by the dramatis persona;
- (iii) Irony of situation: this involves an incongruity between actual circumstances and those that seem appropriate and that which come to pass.

What I have tried to explain through the different illustrations, so far are, some of the uses of the resources of language in poetry. Let us now consider how the poet exploits the resources of music.

## **Summary of Study Session 1**

In this study session you have been introduced to the nature of poetry; definitions have been provided. You have learned of the possible sources of poetry. You have also seen the distinguishing characteristics of poetry in terms of its resources of language such as imagery and figures of speech and resources of music such as rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and so on.

## **Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Study Session 1**

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. Write your answers in your Study Diary and discuss them with your Tutor at the next Study Support Meeting. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

### **SAQ 1.1 (tests Learning Outcome 1.1)**

Attempt creating your own definition of poetry

### **SAQ 1.2 (tests Learning Outcome 1.2)**

I hear much poetry in the prayers and entreaties of beggars. Where in your day-to-day life do you often hear poetry?

## **Study Session 2**

### **The Sound of Poetry**

#### **Introduction**

In this study session, we will explore practical ways you can successfully appreciate a poem.

#### **Learning Outcomes for Study Session 2**

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- 2.1 use devices of music in a poem.
- 2.2 discover the theme of a poem.

#### **2.1 Poetry and the Resources of Music**

For the purpose of this study, let me discuss two relevant basic musical elements. These are *melody* and *beat*. Poetry often makes use of sounds which are carefully selected and organized to give harmonious appeal through repetition, or metrical patterns, or rhythmic flow. I must emphasize also that since poetry is a product of human utterance, it naturally has rhythm. I also like to add, however that **not all poetry has rhyme** (rime), and **not all poetry has meter**. The rhythmic flow of a poem is enhanced by the use of any or a combination of alliteration, anaphora/repetition, assonance, and consonance.

##### **2.1.1 Alliteration**

Repetition of initial identical, mostly consonantal, sounds in two or more words on the same line in a poem for the purpose of creating lyrical effect to give meaning to the overall effect of the poem. e.g.

- a. “Solo speaking of complex ways” (s - sound)
- b. “Is it indeed Rome and room enough?” (r - sound)
- c. “The hissing snake sails swiftly across the green lawn” (s - sound)

In example (c), the effect of the ‘s’ sound suggests the swiftness of the snake, the hissing sound and S suggesting a snake symbol. Occasionally, there can be alliteration of sounds within words on a line; example; murmuring of innumerable disgruntled commuters.”

##### **2.1.2 Accent**

Emphasis that has to do with the combination of any of - loudness, duration (timing), pitch (low or high), and timbre. In poetry, accent is synonymous with *stress*.

##### **2.1.3 Cadence**

Recurrence of accent or emphasis accompanied by modulations of rising and falling of voice.

##### **2.1.4 Caesura**

The main internal (media) pause of a line of poetry usually indicated by the use of natural stops in speech, punctuation or rhetoric rendered orally. The pauses which contribute to the rhythm of poetry do vary in length. Where a line of a poem requires a pause at the end, it is called “end-stopped”. End-stopped is a line of poem in which both the thought and (sentence) structure conclude simultaneously.

In John Keats “*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*”, the poet makes use of double caesura to emphasize serenity and the barrenness of the natural setting: And no//birds//sing.”

### 2.1.5 Anaphora

Repetition of the same word(s) at the beginning to two or more lines of a poem, for example:

With her three fingers red with blood,  
With dog’s blood  
With bull’s blood  
With goat’s blood

(Birago Diop “*Viaticum*”).

Note the repetition of the word “with”. It is meant to function as anaphoric element.

### 2.1.6 Repetition

The same line occurring in two or more places, or used as refrain in a poem. The repeated lines may slightly vary, in some poems, they still qualify as repetition. The repeated lines with slight variation can be found in poems like “The Sun on this Rubble after Rain”, by the South African Poet Dennis Brutus.

### 2.1.7 Parallelism

Repetition of words at the beginning of some lines in a poem. If a poet frequently stresses the equal parts of sentences, such is referred to as balanced. Parallelism, aside from providing emphasis enhances the musicality of a poem. Diop’s *Viaticum* offers a good example.

### 2.1.8 Assonance

Repetition of internal vowel sounds followed by consonants in two or more words on the same line of a poem, and in more than one stressed syllable for the purpose of creating lyrical effect that suggests the mood and meaning the poet wishes to convey. This is usually more effective in oral rendition, for example:

- (i) “feeble reeds”
- (ii) “often we will our real desires”.
- (iii) “Blake breaks the snaking flakes”
- (iv) “Float...goat”.

### 2.1.9 Consonance

Repetition of similar consonantal sounds at the middle or end of two or more words on the same line of a poem e.g. “terrible trouble”.

Sounds in poetry are similar to melody in music. Similarly, music has beat and so do some poems. Often, poems have meters and where they lack them there is rhythm. In other words, as we have mentioned much earlier, not all poems have meters and/or rhymes (rimes) but certainly all poems have rhythm. Besides the earlier mentioned musical sources, other elements of music employed by the poet include: rhyme (rimes), refrain, onomatopoeia, euphony and cacophony. Other ways by which lyricism is achieved in poetry is through a conscious arrangement of accents. There is the need to explain further this constituent in this arrangement of accents.

## 2.1.10 Rhythm

This wave-like recurrence of sounds in music is a unique phenomenon in poetry. It is the flow of words and phrases or the movement of thought which helps to convey mood and meaning in poetry. Any fixed pattern or rhythmic arrangement of words is called *meter*. In other words, *meter* is a special kind of rhythm. It is a pattern that has to do with the stressed and unstressed syllables. *Foot* usually contains one or two syllables only.

- (i) One unstressed syllable with one stressed:  
an iamb / v : /                                  (arise)
- (ii) One stressed syllable with one unstressed:  
a trochee / : v /                                  (welcome)
- (iii) Two unstressed syllable with one stressed:  
an anapest / v v : /                                  (in my heart)
- (iv) One stressed syllable with two unstressed:  
a dactyl /: v v /                                  (photograph)
- (v) Two unstressed syllables:  
a spondee / v v /                                  (my name)
- (vi) A monosyllabic foot stressed or unstressed:  
/ ; / (come) or / v /                                  (a, of, in)
- (vii) One stressed syllable between two unstressed”  
an amphibril / v: v /                                  (Jehovah)

*Line:* Usually a line can have one or more feet.

One foot	-	monometer
Two feet	-	di-meter
Three feet	-	tri-meter
Four feet	-	tetra-meter
Five feet	-	penta-meter
Six feet	-	hexa-meter.

## 2.1.11 Rhyme

It suggests simply the use of matching sounds at the end of two or more lines of poetry. Types of rhymes include;

- (i) Alternate rhymes: a sequence of alternately rhyming lines e.g.  
Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!-a  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;                                  -b  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless                                  -a  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-leaves run;                          -b  
(J. Keats, “To Autumn”)
- (ii) Couplet: a sequence of two rhyming  
“Like men we’ll face the murderous, cowardly pack, -a  
Pressed to the wall, dying, fighting back!”                                  -a  
(C. McKay, “If We Must Die”)

Note: All Shakespearian sonnets end with an indented couplet.

- (iii) Initial or beginning rhyme: a sequence of two similar words, or words with similar syllable(s) at the beginning of the lines of a poem. e.g.

...the tranquil souls,  
the breaths of the ancestors,  
the ancestors who were men,  
the ancestors who were sages...

(Birago Diop, “Viaticum”)

- (iv) End-rhyme: rhyme that occurs at the end of the lines e.g.:

and I have raised my three fingers towards the Moon  
towards the full Moon, the full, naked Moon...  
beyond the seas and further still  
beyond the sea and further, further still

(Birago Diop, “Viaticum”)

- (v) Visual or Eye-rhyme: a sequence of two or more visually (that appear correct from the spelling) sound effect or pronunciation is half-rhyme e.g.

Come live with me and be my Love,  
And we will all the pleasures prove,  
And if these pleasures may thee move,  
Come live with me and be my love,

(Christopher Marlowe, “The Passionate Shepherd  
to His Love”)

- (vi) Half-rhyme: imperfect rhyme resulting from the use of consonance and at times of assonance e.g. as in (v) above.

- (vii) Triplet, and multiple rhymes: a sequence of three or more rhyming lines e.g.

“With her three fingers red with blood”  
“With dog’s blood”  
“With bull’s blood”  
“With goat’s blood” (Birago Diop “Viaticum”).

**Note:** Rhyme generally helps the musical quality of a poem. However, frequent use of rhyme can become monotonous, too artificial and which, most often, allows for a distortion of the syntactic elements of the syntactic/lexical structures in poetry.

## 2.2 Poetry Appreciation

In terms of its subjects, technique and mode, poetry can be put into various uses. The subject of a poem can be either of two things, public or private, depending on what informs the subject. A private poem deals with private feelings, subject and emotions, for example, love or a poet’s identity. Christopher Okigbo’s “Idoto” belongs to this category. A public poem deals with public life, politics socio-economic matters, wars, etc. For example, Okigbo’s “Paths of Thunder” or Niyi Osundare’s *Village Voices*. The idea of public or private is a mere demarcation of convenience. Most often we do have a combination of the two.

The fundamental areas to address your mind to when appreciating a poem include, the theme, subject matter, (setting), technique/style, languages, diction, mood, and tone. I shall briefly comment on them.

### **2.2.1 Theme (Topicality)**

Quite a good a number of critics believe that theme and subject matter is one and the same thing. Perhaps this is so because of the very narrow margin between the two which only a discerning mind can perceive. I need to emphasize that theme and subject matter are, indeed, not the same thing.

Every poet has a purpose for writing a poem regardless of manner of presentation. A poet may choose to state directly his/her theme or such thematic preoccupations may simply be implied. In other words, the theme may be suggested through the poetic voice, atmosphere, setting, style, and plot in case of a narrative or dramatic poem (like the epic, romance, heroic chant). By implication, theme is a composite statement which requires our understanding of other basic elements.

Locating a theme in a poem may be a little difficult where a poem appears vague or ambiguous or inconsistent. Nevertheless, identifying a theme should not be a matter of guess work. In identifying a theme, you must know how the poet suggests his/her theme, whether through the use of symbols, allegory, irony, or satire. Or whether the poet chooses to state his/her theme through the poetic voice (persona), or through the conflict arising from opposing ideas, situations, or characters (as in a narrative or a dramatic poem). Contextually, the theme of a poem, or of any other literary form, is informed by its social, moral, individual, political, or spiritual reality of the author's, and in this case poet's, universe. Therefore, in order to find meaning in, or derive full pleasure from, a poem you must put yourself in the poet's universe and consciously subsume a part of yourself.

Since theme is the key or central meaning or message or idea in a literary work, in this case, a poem, it must therefore be emphasized that it is not the same thing as subject-matter. Subject matter is the content-summary that gives a clue to the central idea (theme). In other words, subject matter makes the theme deducible. The illustration below further explains the correctness of this latter position. It is a simple animal story, entitled, Rebellion.

Once upon a time in the animal kingdom, the Cat also known as Zimbo the Prophet, announced to the animal community that there would be famine throughout the land. The famine, the prophet warned, would last seven years. Nobody ever took Zimbo's earlier prophesies lightly because of their precision.

King Lion therefore summoned all his subjects to deliberate on how to avert the impending doom. At last, it was decided that the animals would, collectively, cultivate a very large farm and store its produce after harvesting them in a very big barn from which members of the community would receive their daily supply for the period of the famine.

The following week, all the animals including the young one's and their mothers set to work. After several months, the task was completed. A very hard task, no doubt. The animals left for their respective homes to attend to other personal matters while waiting for the harvest which, again, they agreed, was to be collectively carried out.

Throughout the period of the hard labour, a family was missing. It was the tortoise family. Tiroko had instructed his wife, Yanibo, and children not to participate in the communal farming. It was characteristic of him to have some tricks up his sleeve. He and his family members had cleverly avoided detection by other animals throughout the period of the hard labour. They spent their time for leisure, and nobody detected.

At last, the harvest day was announced. A night preceding the day, Tiroko instructed Yanibo and his four children to carry a big basket each and follow him. In the dead of the night, Tiroko led his family to the community farm. They picked the choicest of the farm produce in their baskets and made for home.

On the way, a light wind gradually gave way to violent storm, uprooting and felling giant trees. The tortoise family was forced to seek refuge under an Iroko tree with the hope that whenever the storm abated, it would continue on its journey. But the storm became more and more violent. Suddenly, the quaking Iroko tree was uprooted by the force of the violent storm. Before Tiroko and his family could move or think of anything to do, the Iroko tree came crashing heavily on the six-member family. Tiroko, Yanibo and their four children were crushed to death. The end of the story.

For you to identify the theme of the story you must pay close attention to the intention of the narrator. What does he want to achieve? What does he aim at? It is the story of a rebellious family, yes, but it is more than that. *The core message* of the passage is the same thing as the theme. In this passage, the core message is implied, not directly stated. You may suggest any of the following as the theme of the passage;

- (a) Unpatriotic acts are evil
- (b) Rebellion against a common goal is self-destructive.
- (c) The wages of sin is death

The difference between a theme and a subject matter is that while the former expresses an author or a poet's intention, the latter is a summary which brings out the major highlights of a story, or a poem. Therefore, a theme is not a summary in the strict sense of the word, whereas a subject matter, more or less, is a summary. It is in the light of this explanation that the subject matter of the above passage must recognize the "topical issues" that constitute the story and the development of the plot. The issues include, the cat's prophecy of famine; animal decision to have a communal farm; and hard labour; tortoise family and the attempt to cheat and steal; the storm and the tragic end of tortoise family. That summary is the subject matter. No more, no less.

Similarly, a poem can best be handled the way the above passage is treated. Another example: Christopher Marlow's "A Passionate Shepherd to his love":

Come live with me and be my love  
And we will all the pleasures prove,  
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,  
And all the craggy mountains yields.

There we will sit upon the rocks,  
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,  
By shallow rivers to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses  
With a thousand fragrant posies,  
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle  
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool  
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;  
Fair lined slippers for the cold,  
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy buds,  
With coral clasps and amber studs:  
And if these pleasures may thee move,  
Come live with me and be my love.

The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing  
For thy delight each May morning;  
If these delights thy mind may move,  
Then live with me and be my love.

For you to arrive at the theme of this poem, you have to examine what the poet's intention might possibly be. The poem is, no doubt, an appeal by the poetic persona to his lover to join him in what seems to be a paradise. Many students and critics have often taken this to be the theme. While this is partly correct, a more critical look at the poem is likely to reveal the obvious which is that, more prominence is given to nature than to the lady. The poet is more preoccupied with the celebration of the beauty and the abundant riches of nature like most pastoral poets, than with some other considerations. Therefore, the theme of the poem is largely, "a celebration of the beauty and the abundant riches of nature".

The subject matter is expected to take cognizance of the topical highlights in the poem: the poet's invitation to his lover; the beauty of the physical feature – hills, valleys, rivers, unpolluted natural music; the unadulterated natural resources, all of which are seductive enough to lure the poet's love to his "paradise".

In other words, while theme is the central concern or central idea of a poem, or any literary work; or a central concept which a work embodies like war, love, sorrow or happiness, etc; subject matter is a broader summary which highlights the "topic stages" of a literary work.

## 2.2.2 Diction

This is the poet's choice of words in the poem. Often young poets and students have associated strange and usually inaccessible words with poetry. This has been proved wrong over the years. Okot p'Bitek's or Niyi Osundare's, or Ademola Dasylva's poetry is characterized by simple everyday diction and yet they are poetic because of the manner of the word usage.

What time of night it is  
I do not know  
Except that like some fish

### ***Doped out of the deep***

I have bobbed up bellywise  
From stream of sleep  
And no cocks crow. (J.P. Clark's "Night Rain")

### **Anthem for Doomed Youth**

(Wilfred Owen)

WHAT passing-bells for these who die as **cattle**?  
Only the **monstrous anger** of the guns,  
Only the **stuttering rifles' rapid rattle**  
Can patter out their hasty horizons.  
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,  
Nor any voice of mourning save **the choirs-**  
The **shrill**, demented choirs of **wailing shells**;  
And bugles calling for them from the shires.  
  
What candles may be held to speed them all?  
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes  
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.  
The pallor of girl' brows shall be their pall;  
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,  
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds. (our emphasis)

Therefore, it is not how difficult the choice of words is but how best the words have been put into use. In other words, it is the appropriateness of the word which must interest you as a student of poetry. Now, do the words in bold letters suggest anything, any meaning to you? Read the lines again, and pronounce the words loud and with exaggeration. The predominant ‘r’-sound in line three is suggestive of the sound of the rifles in a battle. Similarly, the repeated ‘sh’-sound in line seven evokes the agonizing shrills of the wounded and the dying.

- ITQ Identify and describe the poet’s use of imagery in lines 1 to 5.
- ITA In the first line the image of cattle is evoked to portray the worthlessness of those dying. Line two makes us think of guns as monstrous beings while line three makes us think of them as stutterers struggling with consonants, rattling. In line four, their fleeting lives become hasty horizons.

### **2.2.3 Form**

Form is the shape or structure of a poem. The form of a poem involves how the word-order, sentence and rhythmic structures (e.g. repetition, etc.) are determined. Inclusive are terms like stanzas (regular or irregular), lyrical ballads, couplet, sonnet, blank and free verses. It is important not only to recognize a poem as a sonnet, etc., but what effect such form has on the subject. Octave presents a situation or raises a philosophical question, the Sestet proffers the poet’s thoughts or solution to the same. I hope to make available to you relevant examples of some of the poems at the appropriate time under a different heading altogether.

#### **A. Blank verse**

A form of poetry with unrhymed iambic pentameter. It is a form commonly used in poetic drama, for example some Shakespearian plays, and dramatic poems like John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Blank verse, by its nature or form, is naturally close to speech than most metric lines. Although it is regular but this is often with slight variations of the iambic pattern by means of run-on-lines, for example;

Whoever loves, if he does not propose

The right true end of love, he's one that goes  
To Sea for nothing but to make him sick.  
And love's bear-whelp born, if we o'er-lick  
Our love, and force it new strange shapes to take.  
We err, and of a lump a monster make...  
(John Donne, Elegy 18: "Love's Progress")

### B. Free verse

The meter of much of modern poetry is free verse. Free verse does not suggest metric liberty, it simply means that the control of the verse is informed by the poet's own emotion or stream of consciousness and not by an external order or rule. Despite the non-adherence to any given rigid pattern, the poetry creates its own internal rhythm. It is based on the irregular rhythmic cadence. Modern poetry has order and a great deal of restraint.

#### *In Memoriam*

(Leopold Sedar Senghor)

Sunday.  
The crowding stony faces of my fellows make me afraid.  
Out of my tower of glass haunted by headaches and my restless Ancestors  
I watch the roofs and hills wrapped in mist  
Wrapped in peace...the chimneys are heavy and stark.  
At their feet my dead are sleeping, all my dreams made dust  
All my dreams, blood freely spilt along the streets, mingled with blood from butcheries.  
And now, from this observatory, as if from the outskirts of the town  
I watch my dreams listless along the streets, sleeping at the foot of the hills  
Like the forerunners of my race on the banks of the Gambia and the hills  
Now of the Seine, at the foot of the hills.  
Let my mind turn to my dead!  
Yesterday was All Saints, the solemn anniversary of the sun  
In all the cemeteries, there was no one to remember.  
O dead who have always refused to die, who have resisted death  
From the Sine to the Seine, and in my fragile veins you my unyielding blood  
Guard my dreams as you have guarded your sons, your slender, limbed wanderers  
O dead, defend the roofs of Paris in this sabbath mist  
Roofs that guard my dead  
That from the dangerous safety of my tower, I may go down into the street  
To my brothers whose eyes are blue  
Whose hands are hard.

### ***The Vulture***

(David Diop)

In those days  
When civilisation kicked us in the face  
When holy water slapped our cringing brows  
The vultures built in the shadow of their talons  
The bloodstained monument of tutelage  
In those days  
There was painful laughter on the metallic hell of the roads  
And the monotonous rhythm of the paternoster  
Drowned the howling of the plantations  
O the bitter memories of extorted kisses  
Of promises broken at the point of a gun  
Of foreigners who did not seem human  
You who know all the books but knew not love  
Nor our hands which fertilise the womb of the earth  
Hands instinct at the root with revolt  
In spite of your songs of pride in the charnel-houses  
In spite of the desolate villages of Africa torn apart  
Hope lived in us like a citadel  
And from Swaziland's mines to the sweltering sweat of Europe's factories  
Spring will be reborn under our bright steps.

- ITQ Differentiate between blank verse and free verse
- ITA Blank verse does not follow rhyming patterns while free verse does not follow strict metrical patterns

#### **2.2.4 Structure**

The structure of a poem, like any literary text, is the result of a conscious arrangement of the material or the various elements from which the text is put together and integrated for the purpose of providing a unified vision that underlies the text. Structure, in other words, is a deliberate construction that ensures proper placement of ideas, invents, or situations for maximum artistic effect. The structure of a poem can be determined directly or physically, or simply, it can be internalized and not made apparent. By physical structure, we mean the shape of the poem: visual shape, length of the lines, number of stanzas or verse paragraphs, whether the shape is emblematic or not, a sonnet, free verse, etc. The internal structure is the poem's inner (intrinsic) design; for example, imagery and symbols which inform, and through which the central thought or idea is conveyed. The best method to adopt when analyzing the structure of a poem is to deduce the idea being expressed by each component part. The relationship of each component part reveals the structure of the poem while the logic of the idea being pursued reveals the theme.

##### **A. Stanza**

It refers to a group of lines arranged to form a uniform pattern generally suggested by a rhyme scheme. The rhythmical pattern is often repeated in each of the groups of the poetic lines as are common in lyrics or church hymns. If a unit within a poem does not have a formal regular stanzaic

pattern as is common with free verse or modern poetry, it can be referred to as verse paragraph or poetic segment.

COME' live/ with' me/ and' be/ my' love/  
And' we/ will 'all/ the' plea/sures' prove/,  
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,  
And all the craggy mountains yield.

There' we/ will' sit/ u'pon/ the' rocks/,  
And' see/ the' shep/herds' feed/ their' flocks/,  
By shallow rivers to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

(From Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love")

○

### B. Run-on-line (enjambment)

This is a continuation of thought and structure of a poetic sentence from one line to the next without a pause, often, in an almost prosaic manner, for example;

What time of night it is  
I do not know  
Except that like some fish

#### *Doped out of the deep*

I have bobbed up bellywise  
From stream of sleep  
And no cocks crow.

(J.P. Clark, "Night Rain")

### 2.2.5 Technique

Technique varies between extreme formalism (like the Sonnet) and extreme freedom, or direct spontaneity of other forms such as we have in surrealistic poetry, for example, Alexander Pope's heroic couplet in "The Rape of the Lock".

### From "the Rape of the Lock"

(Alexander Pope)

#### The Toilet

AND now, unveiled, the Toilet stands displayed,  
Each silver vase in mystic order laid.  
First, robed in white, the Nymph intent adores,  
With head uncovered, the Cosmetic powers.  
A heavenly Image in the glass appears,

To that she bends, to that her eyes the rears;  
The inferior Priestess, at her altar's side,  
Trembling, begins the sacred rites of Pride.  
Unnumbered treasure so peat once, and here  
The various offerings of the world appear;  
From each she nicely culls with curious toil,  
And decks the Goddess with the glittering spoil.  
This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,  
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.  
The tortoise here and elephant unite,  
Transformed to combs, the speckled and the white.  
Here files of pins extend their shining rows,  
Puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billets-doux.  
Now awful Beauty puts on all its arms;  
The fair each moment rises in her charms  
Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,  
And calls forth all the wonders of her face;  
Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,  
And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.  
The busy sylphs surround their darling care,  
These set the head, and those divide the hair,  
Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown;  
And Betty's praised for labours not her own.

One can also talk of category of techniques between narration and extreme condensation between which one has intermediary forms which make use of cryptic and epigrammatic as in some metaphysical poems, or emblematic devices as it obtains in George Herbert's "Easter Wings", "The Alter". Herbert was a metaphysical poet.

### The Pulley

(George Herbert)

WHEN God at first made man,  
Having a glass of blessings standing by,  
'Let us', said he, 'pour on him all we can:  
Let the world's riches, which dispersed lie,  
Contract into a span.'

So strength first made a very;  
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour, pleasure;  
When almost all was not, God made a stay,  
Perceiving that, alone of all his treasure,  
Rest in the bottom lay.

'For if I should', said he,  
'Bestow this jewel also on my creature,  
He would adore my gifts instead of me,  
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:  
So both should losers be.

## Easter Wings

(George Herbert)

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,<sup>o</sup>

Through foolishly he lost the same,

Decaying more and more,

Till he became

5

With thee

## O let me rise

As larks, harmoniously,

And sing this day thy victories:

10

My tender age in sorrow did begin:

And still with sicknesses and shame

Thou didst so punish sin.

That I became

15

With these

Let me combine

And feel this day thy victory:

For, if I imp<sup>o</sup> my wing on thine,

Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

20

### **2.2.6 Language**

If a poet chooses expressions that reflect the casual way people talk ordinarily, the language may be described as casual or colloquial. But if, on the other hand, the language is similar to the one we are familiar with in books, then we may say it is formal or learned. A formal language may be either simple or inaccessible.

### 2.2.7 Mood

Mood simply implies the underlying attitude which runs through a poem. A predominant spirit indicating mode of action perceptible in a poem. On one extreme is the *ironic* mode, and on the other extreme, we have the *lyrical* mode. The difference in this case is that in the “lyrical mode”, there is a direct relationship between the poet and his work, whereas in the ironic, it is indirect. Others include reflective or meditative mood; heroic and mock-heroic (its sub-mode).

### 2.2.8 Tone

Tone can be defined as the attitude of the poetic voice (persona) to the subject matter which could be humorous, satiric, formal, casual, etc. Tone is determined through the personality of the poetic persona whose voice we “hear” in the poem; the quality of his voice as perceived by the listening or reading audience. It is important to emphasize here that the “I” voice in a poem is not necessarily the poet’s. The ‘I’ is the poetic voice or the poetic persona, and should be treated as such. Similarly, the listener may not necessarily be you or me. The poetic persona may be addressing someone other than the listener or reader.

## **Summary of Study Session 2**

In this study session, you examined how to appreciate a poem, in other words, how to identify in a poem the theme, form, structure, and so on.

## **Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Study Session 2**

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. Write your answers in your Study Diary and discuss them with your Tutor at the next Study Support Meeting. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

### **SAQ 2.1 (tests Learning Outcome 2.1)**

(a) Recognise some resources of music in the extract below:

Here files of pins extend their shining rows,  
Puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billets-doux.  
Now awful Beauty puts on all its arms;  
The fair each moment rises in her charms  
Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,  
And calls forth all the wonders of her face;

(From “the Rape of the Lock” by Alexander Pope)

(b) What resources of language can you identify in the extract below

They wail in vain who are possessed by Poverty,  
A sea of tears does not exorcise His Majesty.  
With the debt collector he approaches  
And all chicks in the compound are trampled to death.  
In his kingdom slimming doctors are banished,  
For all flabs disappear as he appears,  
Like a rat does sighting a cat.  
The poverty-possessed eat the best of delicacies  
Only in their dreams;  
And receive uncountable billions of naira  
Only in Slumberland Central Bank.  
And wait for tomorrow,  
Always tomorrow,  
And kill time salivating, and hero-worshipping the rich.

(From ‘To Poverty’ by Ìgbékèléolúwa Sàlárù)

### **SAQ 2.2 (tests Learning Outcome 2.2)**

Identify the theme of the poem below

#### ***The Vulture***

(David Diop)

In those days  
When civilisation kicked us in the face

When holy water slapped our cringing brows  
The vultures built in the shadow of their talons  
The bloodstained monument of tutelage  
In those days  
There was painful laughter on the metallic hell of the roads  
And the monotonous rhythm of the paternoster  
Drowned the howling of the plantations  
O the bitter memories of extorted kisses  
Of promises broken at the point of a gun  
Of foreigners who did not seem human  
You who know all the books but knew not love  
Nor our hands which fertilise the womb of the earth  
Hands instinct at the root with revolt  
In spite of your songs of pride in the charnel-houses  
In spite of the desolate villages of Africa torn apart  
Hope lived in us like a citadel  
And from Swaziland's mines to the sweltering sweat of Europe's factories  
Spring will be reborn under our bright steps.

### **Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Study Session 2**

- SAQ 2.1**      (a) There is a rhyming scheme of a-a-b-b-c-c. Then on line two there is alliteration in 'Puffs, powders, patches and in Bibles, billets-doux.  
                      (b) Poverty is personified. Then there is the use of simile in line seven: 'Like a rat does sighting a cat.'
- SAQ 2.2**      The evils of colonialism, slavery and the religion imposed to explain them away

# **Study Session 3**

## **Forms of Poetry**

### **Introduction**

There are endless varieties of human culture which have given rise to different poetic cultures. In this study session, you will learn about, four major poetic forms. These are:

- (i) Narrative
- (ii) Satirical
- (iii) Dramatic
- (iv) Lyric and Ode

### **Learning Outcomes for Study Session 3**

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- 3.1 point out the similarities and difference(s) between the epic and the romance.
- 3.2 state the tools and functions of a satire.
- 3.3 identify the two ways by which dramatic poetry may be expressed.
- 3.4 highlight the predominant features of lyric poetry

### **3.1 Narrative Poetry**

A narrative poem tells a tale in verse, and usually from an omniscient point of view. The epic\*, the Romance, and the Heroic chants fall under this category. The epic is a very long narrative poem. It is significantly a product of the feudal stage in the historical development of society. Epic poetry is the ultimate, the farthest a poet can go, and the sublime or the hallmark in poetic attainment. Only a negligible number of poets ever attained the mark. The epic celebrates real historic events and the greatness, the heroic achievements, the mores and the civilization of a race (or nation) as embodied in a central hero. The destiny of the nation is delicately tied to the fate of the central hero. There are two kinds of epic poetry, the oral (primary epic), and the written (secondary epic). The epics of Homer like “Odyssey and Iliad” (Greek); the Anglo-Saxon “Beowulf”, and in Africa, John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo’s “Ozidi”; Gorden Innes’ recorded three “Sunjata” versions; *The epic of SON-JARA* text by Fa-Digi Sisoko; “the Mwindo” epics of the Baganda, recorded by Biebuycks; and Daniel Kunene’s “Chaka” are all oral epics.

On the other hand, epic poems like John Milton’s “Paradise Lost” and Virgil’s “Aeneid” belong to the tradition of secondary orality because they are written epics. The epic is expressed orally or in written form in highly elevated language and style. A standard secondary epic (written) usually has twelve books often subdivided into cantos. On the other hand, an oral epic may take up to seven days to run through by a minstrel, or a traditional griot. The use of epic simile (main source of digression), repetition, etc., is largely responsible for this unusual length or volume of epic poetry.

Romance in this context does not have anything to do with lovers necking under some innocuous tree in the dark. Romance is a poetic form that blossomed particularly in the medieval English society. It was generally believed to have originated from ancient Rome. Romance is a poetic tradition that is very close to the epic in form, structure and topicality. It is also a very long narrative poem, but not as long as epic. Like the epic, romance poetry celebrates the greatness and heroic exploits of a central hero, usually a knight riding a horse (e.g., Sir Gawaine of the legendary king Arthur’s Court, or a Christian Knight, the Knight of the Red Cross in Edmund Spenser’s “The Faerie Queene”). Romance often does adopt allegorical approach in its treatment of topicality. Its setting usually alternates between the physical or realistic world and the supernatural world where the

unusual is willed or made to happen. Like the epic, the central hero embarks on a dangerous and long journey in search of greatness. Like his epic counterpart, he encounters difficulties in the course of his journey at the end of which his society is the better for it. The medieval England's "Sir Gawaine and the Knight of the Greene Castle" and Edmund Spenser's "The Faerie Queene" which belong to romance tradition shall be given a more detailed attention in this study. Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock", Lord Bryon's "Don Juan", S.T. Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and quite a good number of modern short poems like, Thomas Hardy's "At the Draper's" or J.P. Clark's (-Bekederemo) "Night Rain", all share the narrative poetic form.

- ITQ Epic may be primary or secondary; what is the difference between them?
- ITA The primary is oral while the secondary is written

### **3.2 Satirical Poetry**

Satirical poems comment on human experience. They lampoon the follies or vices of men by the use of exaggeration, ridicule, sarcasm, irony, and humour for the purpose of reducing the subject to absurdity. A satirical poem criticizes actual life in intelligible poetic structure of varying length. Often they assume a journey motif of similar dimension as those of epic and the English medieval romance. A satirical poem may sound acerbic and biting yet hilarious, witty and elegant, thus compelling the audience to laugh at him/herself.

### **3.3 Dramatic Poetry**

This is a form of poetry that is usually written in dramatic monologue. *Monologue* as opposed to *dialogue* involves only the poetic voice (persona) presumed to be addressing, or responding to, someone else (unseen). It is done in such a way that only the poetic voice is heard, and through whose address, response or reaction it is possible for the audience to imagine what the unseen addressee might likely be saying. The drama takes place in the audience's imagination. The dramatic verse form was popularized by the English metaphysical poets and other poets like Percy B. Shelley, and Lord Byron.

We must quickly add, however, that later development has confirmed the possibility of a dramatic verse having a dramatic situation in which characters engage in a dialogue. Thomas Hardy's "At the Draper's", is a good example. In contemporary African poetry, dramatic verse form is known to have been popularized by Okot p'Bitek in "Song of Lawino", "Song of Ocol" and "Song of Malaya". Other examples include, Wole Soyinka's "Telephone Conversation" and L.S. Senghor's "Chaka". More African poets have continued this poetic trend because it readily identifies with indigenous African oral poetry tradition. They include, Niyi Osundare, *Moon Songs*, Okinba Launko Ire and *Other Poems for Performance* Tanure Ojaide, and lately, Ademola Dasylva's *Songs of Odamolugbe*.

### **3.4 Lyric Poetry**

These are poems composed with the mind to produce songs or music with a relatively fixed form. Lyrics are normally short, and between eight and hundred lines. They usually conform to the rules of music such as beat, meter, rhyme and rhythm. The ballad, the sonnet and pastoral poetry strictly belong to the lyrical mode. Although, the ode may fall under this category too, its lyricism is largely intrinsic. I shall briefly comment on each:

#### **3.4.1 The Ballad**

It is one of the oldest and simplest lyrics that originate from oral tradition. It is a song narrative which tells a story of heroic exploits or, of a common-place event, expressing basic human emotions such as love, hate, fear or surprise at physical or supernatural world. Structurally, the melody is made simple

by the four-line stanza of iambic verse coupled with interlocking rhyme and a refrain that gives it a dramatic touch. E.g.,

### **Sir Patrick Spens**

(Anon.)

The king sits in Dumferline town,  
Drinking the blude-reid wine: *blood-red*  
“O whar will I get a guid sailor  
To sail this ship of mine?”

Up and spak an eldern knicht,  
Sat at the King’s richt knee: *spoke; ancient, knight  
right*  
“Sir Patrick Spens is the best sailor  
That sails upon the sea.”

The king has written a braid<sup>o</sup> letter *broad*  
And signed it wi’his hand,  
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens,  
Was walking on the sand.

The first line that Sir Patrick read,  
A loud lauched he; *laugh*  
The next line that Sir Patrick read,  
The tear blinded his ee. *eye*

“O wha is the has done this deed,  
This ill deed done to me,  
To send me out this time o’ the year,  
To sail upon the sea?

“Make haste, make haste, my mirry men all, *merry*  
Our guid ship sails the morn.”

“O say na<sup>o</sup> sae, <sup>o</sup>my master dear, *not/so*  
For I fear a deadly storm.

“Late late yestre’en I saw the moon  
Wi’the auld moon in her arm, *old*  
And I fear, I fear, my dear master,  
That we will come to harm.”

O our scots nobles were richt laith *loath*  
To weet their cork-heeled shoon, *net/shoes*  
But lang owre a’the play were played *long, after*  
Their hats they swam aboon *above*  
O lang, lang may their ladies, sit,  
Wi’their fans into their hand,  
Or e’er they see Sir Patrick Spens  
Come sailing to the land.

O lang, lang may the ladies stand,  
Wi’their gold kembs in their hair, *combs*  
Waiting for their ain dear lords, *own*

For they'll see thame na mair.	<i>them no more</i>
Half o'er, half o'er to Aberdour	
It's fifty fadom deep,	<i>fathoms</i>
And there lies guid Sir Patrick Spens,	<i>good</i>
Wi'the scots lords at his feet.	

### 3.4.2 Sonnet

A sonnet is the most common and the most formal of the lyric poems. Its poetic form, like the ballad, has an imposed pattern. The English sonnet is a more common one. The sonnet is believed to have originated in Italy through Petrarch (1303-74). This is why the original form is referred to as Italian or Petrarchan sonnet. The Italian sonnet was later introduced to England by Edmund Spenser who had cause to travel to Italy where he got fascinated by this novel form of patterned poetry. On his return from Italy, he introduced the Italian sonnet. The English called the new form after Spenser's name. The same sonnet form is referred to as an Italian, or Petrarchan or Spenserian sonnet. The latter sonnet which was largely influenced by the former was introduced by William Shakespeare. This is why it is often referred to as Shakespearian sonnet. It is also known as Elizabethan or the English sonnet.

Both types of sonnet have fourteen lines each. However, not every poem with fourteen lines qualifies as a sonnet. The Italian sonnet has the first eight lines called the octave, i.e. made up of two *quatrains*, and the last six lines called the *sestet*. The octave, which raises an issue of philosophical magnitude, has a rhyme scheme a-b-b-a / a-b-b-a. The rhyme scheme of the sestet varies from c-d-c / c-d-c or c-d-e / c-d-e to something close to these. The sestet suggests an answer or gives a clue to the issue or question raised in the octave.

The Elizabethan or English sonnet does have a different structure even though it has fourteen lines. It has three quatrains of not too distinct stanzas of four lines each, and a couplet. The couplet has a slight initial indentation. The rhyme scheme is in the following order:

- the first quatrain: a-b-a-b
- the second quatrain: c-d-c-d
- the third quatrain: e-f-e-f
- and a couplet: g-g

The Elizabethan sonnet usually has its lines arranged in iambic pentameter.

We must emphasize, however, that in identifying the rhyme scheme, we must be conscious of the fact that a rhyme may be visual (i.e. eye rhyme), as we have in the following lines:

And if these pleasures may thee *move*,  
Come live with me and be my *love*."

Note that "move" and "love" do not sound the same / mu:v / and /lʌv/. however, the two words end with the same order of letters *m-ove* and *l-ove*. There lies the rhyme. Similarly, a rhyme can be determined purely through a similar sound produced by the end-words. This is called audio or ear rhyme, for example;

...and for this I  
the king must pluck an *eye*

often a rhyme may be determined by words with similar sound and with similar order of letters. This is a perfect rhyme. e.g.

“And then again I have been *told*  
Love wounds with heat, as Death with *cold*. ”

### **Upon Westminster Bridge**

(Williams Wordsworth)

EARTH has not anything to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This City now doth, like a garment, wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ship, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

### *The World Is Too Much with Us*

(Williams Wordsworth)

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste or powers:  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!<sup>o</sup>  
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;                       5  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are upgathered now like sleeping flowers;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not, – Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;                           10  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.<sup>o</sup>

### *Sonnet 116*

(William Shakespeare)

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove.

O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests and it never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and checks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error, and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

### *Holy Sonnet 6*

(John Donne)

DEATH, be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
Much pleasure-then, from thee much more must flow  
And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
Rest of their bones and soul's delivery.  
Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings and desperate men,  
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;  
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well,  
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally  
And death shall be no more. Death, thou shalt die.

### **3.4.3 Pastoral**

Originally developed in classical times, pastoral poetry became popularized during the Renaissance, and at the end of the eighteenth century as a reaction against the so-called urban-civilization of the neo-Classical period. Pastoral poems have identifiable subject matter without a structurally fixed stanzaic form or length. They have elaborate stylized language devices, measured rhythm and consistent movement of sounds and topicality. Pastoral poems are traditionally and thematically preoccupied with a celebration of the beauty of, and abundance in, nature. These include a

romanticized celebration of fertility, birth, maturity in nature. In other words, pastoral poems celebrate an idealized self-sufficient world of nature and its purity, devoid of decay or pollution. Of particular interest is the rustic simplicity of the nature-loving and nature-dependent lifestyle of shepherds or shepherdesses. Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" is a good example of poetry in this tradition.

Christopher Marlow's "A Passionate Shepherd to his love":

Come live with me and be my love  
And we will all the pleasures prove,  
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,  
And all the craggy mountains yields.

There we will sit upon the rocks,  
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,  
By shallow rivers to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses  
With a thousand fragrant posies,  
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle  
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool  
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;  
Fair lined slippers for the cold,  
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy buds,  
With coral clasps and amber studs:  
And if these pleasures may thee move,  
Come live with me and be my love.

The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing  
For thy delight each May morning;  
If these delights thy mind may move,  
Then live with me and be my love.

### 3.4.4 Elegy/Pastoral Elegy

Still in the pastoral tradition is the elegiac poetry. An elegy laments or speculates on death or the loss of a beloved, a protector and a provider, while at the same time expressing fear of insecurity and uncertainty of the future. A good example is the Anglo-Saxon "Deor's Lament". In tradition Africa we have "Owusu", among others. Another sub-pastoral group is the Pastoral elegy. It has a rustic, almost mystical rural setting in which shepherds, nymphs and ghomids interact. In pastoral elegy,

nature joins in the lament. John Milton's "Lycidas" and Matthew Arnold's "Adonais" are good examples.

## **Summary of Study Session 3**

The narrative poetry, the satirical poetry, the dramatic poetry and the lyric and ode are the poetry forms to which you have just been exposed. Here, you learned that the narrative consists of the epic and the romance and that the satirical poetry uses exaggeration, ridicule, sarcasm, irony, and humour to reduce societal or individual flaws to objects of ridicule. You also learned that the dramatic poetry may be a dramatic monologue or an actual dialogue. Lastly you learned about the lyric forms, which are primarily devised for musical purposes.

## **Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Study Session 3**

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. Write your answers in your Study Diary and discuss them with your Tutor at the next Study Support Meeting. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

### **SAQ 3.1 (tests Learning Outcome 3.1)**

Epic and romance are both forms of the narrative poetry. In what else do they share affinity and in what do they differ?

### **SAQ 3.2 (tests Learning Outcome 3.2)**

Satirical poetry uses exaggeration, ridicule, sarcasm, irony, and humour as tools toward what purpose?

### **SAQ 3.3 (tests Learning Outcome 3.3)**

Dramatic poetry could come into expression in what two ways?

### **SAQ 3.4 (tests Learning Outcome 3.4)**

The ballad, the sonnet and pastoral poetry strictly belong to the lyrical mode. What is their predominant feature?

## **Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Study Session 3**

### **SAQ 3.1**

Both celebrate the greatness and heroic exploits of a central hero, in whom are embodied the mores and the civilization of a race. But the epic is longer than romance and the latter is often about knights riding on horses.

### **SAQ 3.2**

Criticism of societal foibles

### **SAQ 3.3**

As a dramatic monologue, in which only the poetic voice (persona) is heard and the reader has to imagine, through the former's response or reaction, what the unseen addressee might likely be saying; or as actual dialogue.

### **SAQ 3.3**

They are primarily meant to make music. They are short. They have relatively fixed forms.

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