

Course: English Literature (First Year)

Lesson Two: Poem Analysis: “Slumber did my Spirit Seal” by William Wordsworth

Semester: Two

Lecturer: Dr Nihad LAOUAR

Slumber did my spirit seal analysis

I. General Summary:

The story of this poem is about a lover who believes he was in a deep sleep “slumber”

Analysis when he thought that his beloved was immortal. However, as he wakes up, he starts realizing that she was dead and became part of nature.

II. Poem Analysis:

Stanza One:

- The speaker in this stanza begins by describing a psychological state of mind he has been living in for a period of time. The speaker explains that he has been caught in a state of trance which means a state of unconsciousness where the person is unaware of and unresponsive to the external world around them.
- The speaker’s “spirit” is “sealed” in a deep sleep and he is unconscious of certain truths of this world and this verse “I had no human fears” evidences his ignorance of a possible death that can put an end to his relationship.
- In this stanza, we understand that the speaker talks about a loved one in the past tense which hints at the fact that he is lamenting the death of a loved one. This appears in the two last lines of the stanza “She seemed a thing that could not feel”/ “the touch of earthly years”. These two lines show further that due to his idealized love, the speaker has immortalized his lover in the way that he makes her immune from “the touch of earthly years”. This means that she was not subject to aging, hence dying. He believed that his lover was immortal that it was impossible for him to even fathom her death.
- To sum up this stanza, the speaker seems to be shocked after the death of his lover as he describes how unconscious he was of the truth of death and mortality.

Stanza Two:

- This stanza signals a spiritual awakening from the trance state that the speaker has been in.
- This awakening is indicated by the use of “now” in the first line of the stanza. It is at this level that we understand that the speaker shifts to a different state of mind. He is now conscious and fully acknowledges the death of his lover. This occurs in the first two lines that says: “No motion has she now, no force”/ “She neither sees nor hears”. This shows how the woman that he once loved lost her perfect qualities of being full of life and full of power.
- In The last two lines, the speaker describes the young woman in the way that she became part of earth rolling with its daily rotation on its axis and this can be seen in this line: “rolled round in earth’s diurnal course”. The last line: “with rocks, and stones, and trees.” suggests that his lover became motionless and still just like the “stones” and “rocks”.

III. Poetic devices of the poem:

1.Speaker: The speaker of this poem is not identified but we can assume that the gender is male because the poem is supposed to be written about a female named Lucy. Of course, Lucy is not mentioned in this poem per se but she has been the subject of many of William Wordsworth’s poems. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that “Slumber did my Spirit Seal” is one of the “Lucy” poems of Wordsworth.

2.Form: This poem is a strophic poem divided into two stanzas. Each stanza is a quatrain and each stanza of this poem expresses a specific idea. The break between stanzas indicates a shift in themes, hence, ideas.

3.Theme: This poem is an elegy because it mourns the dead of a lover. It can also be pastoral, in that, the poet uses some elements of nature towards the end such as “earth’s daily course, trees, rocks etc.” The general theme of the poem is remorse after the loss of a loved one.

4. Figures of Speech:

- **Metaphor:** An example of metaphor occurs in the first line in that the speaker's "slumber" is a metaphorical sleep that refers to an unconscious state of mind.
- **Alliteration:** repetition of a consonant sound at the start of two or more words:

1. spirit sealed – the 's' sound is repeated
2. rolled round – the 'r' sound is repeated

- **Assonance:** Repetition of a vowel sound in two or more words:

Example: A slumber did my spirit seal

- **Consonance:** Repetition of a consonant sound in two or more words:

Example: Earth diurnal course

- **Personification:** is a figure of speech where a human characteristic is given to inanimate things:

Example: she seemed a thing that could not feel

The touch of earthly years.

In this example time that is indicated in the phrase "earthly years" is given a human characteristic of touch, meaning that time could not touch her and that she wouldn't age.

5. Tone and Mood of the poem: Both stanzas in this poem maintain a sorrowful, yet quiet and peaceful tone and the general mood of the poem is peaceful as the speaker seems to accept the truth about the death of his lover.

6. Rhyme: the rhyme scheme of this poem is (abab cdcd)

7. Symbolism: An example of symbolism in this poem can be found in the second stanza where "rocks and stones" symbolize the quietness and stillness of death. After death, the speaker's lover became as still and passive as these objects.