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10



The Last lecture

Literary

Texts

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Literary Texts 3.10 Last

AYDI 2022/ T1

HELLO EVERYONE!

Lord Byron is our final Romantic poet for this term. We skipped one poet who is Samuel Coleridge. Coleridge is NOT required for the exam.

Student: Coleridge is the friend of William Wordsworth, right?

Professor: That's correct.

The Lyrical Ballads were written by both of them. Wordsworth and Wordsworth co-wrote the Lyrical Ballads.

Lord Byron

- His name is George Gordon Byron. The title "Lord" is because he belonged to an aristocratic family.
- He was one of the greatest and most influential English poets. He descended from two aristocratic families. He had inherited his seat in the House of Lords. Therefore, he is known as Lord Byron.
- Byron went to Trinity College, Cambridge.
- Byron had a physical disability. He had a deformed foot that was made worse by a surgical treatment. He always felt acute embarrassment about his disability.
- Although he had a physical disability, he was a very good sportsman. He played cricket. He made himself an expert boxer, a fencer (sword fighter), a horseman and a powerful swimmer.
- Lord Byron was very attractive. He was passionate, self-reliant, and witty (clever and humorous). He was fashionable and promiscuous (lustful, womanizer) (شهواني، لعوب). He was very attractive and uncontrollable. (Promiscuous means casual and unrestrained in sexual behavior).
- Byron achieved an immense European reputation during his own lifetime.
- The most famous work by him is Don Juan, which is a satire (هجاء) against modern civilization.
- He introduced into literature the idea of the Byronic hero.

The Byronic Hero

He is an alien, mysterious, and gloomy spirit, superior in his passions and powers to the rest of humanity. He is in his isolation absolutely self-reliant, pursuing his own ends against any opposition, human or supernatural.

Another famous poem by Lord Byron is Child Harold's Pilgrimage which he wrote in 1812. When he wrote this poem and published it, he woke up next morning and found himself very famous; he found himself like the deva or the superstar of London.

- Everyone, especially women, wanted to write him letters and to sign the book of poems that he wrote. People generally wanted to be in touch with him.

- Byron became a celebrity with the publication of his poem Child Harold's Pilgrimage. He rapidly became the most brilliant star in the dazzling world of fashion in London. So, he was not only famous in the circle of writers but also in the circle of fashionable London.

- Byron was a sexual magnet for both men and women. He was able to maintain his looks; he was very obsessed about his diet. He maintained his looks only by resorting to a starvation diet of biscuits, soda water, and strong cathartics (purgatives). He wanted to stay very fit physically.

- He was involved at first in an affair with Lady Caroline Lamb who called him "mad, bad and dangerous to know". He was also involved physically with other lovers.

- He tried his hands at lyric poetry.

- After attaining his MA degree, Byron set out on a tour through Portugal and Spain to Malta, and then to Albania, and Greece. This tour took him two years.

- He entered in a sequence of liaisons (secret sexual relationships) with ladies of fashion.

- For relief, he wanted to have a break. He decided to marry a woman called Annabella Milbanke. This marriage produced a daughter. The union, however, between Byron and Annabella did not last, and the marriage ended in a legal separation. Annabella

considered him insane and left him in 1816 and took her daughter.

- The final blow came when Lady Byron, Annabella Milbanke, discovered her husband's incestuous relations with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh. Incestuous is the adjective from incest. There were rumors that he even had a relationship with his half-sister.

From the research that I made about his siblings, I've found that Byron and Augusta Leigh have never met as children; they were born and raised separately. They only met as adults.

Remember that at that time, such life style was not acceptable in that very religious and conservative society. In other words, Byron was unconventional, rebellious, and out of the box.

- As a result of this life style that he had, Byron was ostracized (منبوذ) by all his relatives and friends. He was excluded from society. Byron was ostracized by all but a few friends and was finally forced to leave England forever on April 25, 1816.

- He left to Italy. There, he met the Romantic poet Percy Shelley and his wife Mary Shelley. In Venice, he inaugurated a period of frenzied debauchery that, he estimated, involved more than two hundred women. Debauchery means excessive indulgence in sexual pleasures (الانغماس في الشهوات).

- He was not regretful. He lost being part of the English society; nobody wanted to stay in touch with him in England anymore. In spite of that, he did not regret having this life. He did the same in Italy over and over again.

- Finally, Byron broke off literature for action. He turned into a different of action; military action. He organized an expedition (a military campaign) to assist in the Greek War of Independence from the Turks. The Greek wanted to liberate themselves from the Ottoman Empire.

- Byron felt some kind of sympathy for the Greeks so he went to Greece to fight against the Ottomans or against the Turks.

- To this day, Byron is revered by the Greeks as a national hero.

He became a national hero and a national symbol. He became honored, respected in Greece.

- He died in Greece out of fever at the age of 36.

- Among his best known works are the narrative poem Don Juan, Child Harold's Pilgrimage as well as his short lyric and one of his famous poems She Walks in Beauty.

- Byron is often described as the most flamboyant and notorious of the major Romantics.

Notorious is a person with a bad reputation. He had a very bad reputation as a poet and as a person. He was a very good poet but because of the lifestyle he had, he was notorious.

Flamboyant means someone who is obsessed with fashion.

If you are interested and have time, there is a film on YouTube entitled Byron. It is not a family movie. It is (+18).

- Byron was both celebrated and punished for his aristocratic excesses including his numerous love affairs with both men and women as well as rumors of a scandalous liaison with his half-sister. He was bisexual.

I will be quoting Lord Byron in order to show you how he viewed himself. He says:

"I am so changeable, being everything by turns and nothing long— I am such a strange melange of good and evil, and it would be difficult to describe me."

Melange means mixture. This is how he viewed himself.

Another quotation by Lord Byron:

"There are but two sentiments to which I am constant—a strong love of liberty, and a detestation of cant."

Cant: hypocrisy.

He loved freedom and he hated hypocrisy very much.

That's all about Lord Byron's life.

Let's start with his poem Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos.

Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos

May 9, 1810

By Lord Byron

1

If in the month of dark December
Leander, who was nightly wont
(What maid will not the tale remember?)
To cross thy stream, broad Hellespont!

2

If when the wintry tempest roared
He sped to Hero, nothing loth,
And thus of old thy current pour'd,
Fair Venus! How I pity both!

3

For me, degenerate modern wretch,
Though in the genial month of May
My dripping limbs I faintly stretch,
And think I've done a feat to-day.

4

But since he cross'd the rapid tide,
According to the doubtful story,
To woo-and -Lord knows what beside,
And swam for Love, as I for Glory;

5

'Twere hard to say who fared the best:
Sad mortals! Thus the Gods still plague you!
He lost his labour, I my jest:
For he was drown'd, and I've the ague.

As you notice, the poem is very easy.

Let's read the footnotes in order to discover the meanings of "Sestos" and "Abydos".

A Reference to the narrow strait between Asia and Europe,

known as the Dardanelles. The swim is a reference to an ancient Greek myth in which a young lover living on the Asian side of the strait swam nightly to visit his beloved who was a priestess of the goddess Venus, living on the European side. On a stormy night, the young lover; Leander was drowned as he made his attempt. However, Byron swam the distance on May 3rd 1810.

Strait means (مضيق) .

عنوان القصيدة حول مضيق الدردنيل الذي يقع بين قارتي آسيا وأوروبا.

The poem is based on a *classical allusion* about two lovers. The male lover wanted to swim to the other side to meet his beloved at night. As he was swimming in December, he got drowned. Byron decided to take this swim himself and he survived and so he wrote this poem.

- Stanza number 1

• If in the month of dark December

Leander, who was nightly wont

(What maid will not the tale remember?)

To cross thy stream, broad Hellespont!

∴ Leander: the name of the mythical lover.

∴ Wont: in the habit of.

∴ Maid: a young girl, a virgin girl.

∴ Tale: story.

The story took place in the month of December and it was dark.

It was a regular kind of rendezvous between the two lovers. They used to meet at night. The lover used to cross the stream to the other side and meet his beloved.

The name of the beloved was Hero and the name of the male lover was Leander.

• (What maid will not the tale remember?)

Who will not remember the story of Leander and Hero? It was a very famous story.

• To cross thy stream, broad Hellespont!

The stream refers to the water and the strait of Dardanelles.

∴ Hellespont: the ancient name of Dardanelles.

Leander was in the habit of crossing the stream and Hellespont was broad and big.

Here, we have *apostrophe* in this line.

{Apostrophe is when the speaker addresses someone or something that is absent and cannot respond back.}

In this context, the poet is speaking to the river. Let's move to the next stanza.

- Stanza number 2

• **If when the wintry tempest roared**

∴ Tempest: storm.

∴ Roar: the sound of the lion and the storm.

It was winter and it was a very stormy night. This is a very powerful storm.

Roar is onomatopoeia.

• **He sped to Hero, nothing loth,**

∴ Sped: the past form of speed.

∴ Loth: loath, unwilling.

He went very quickly to meet his beloved at night in December. He was not loth; he was willing and happy to do this

• **And thus of old thy current pour'd,**

Fair Venus! How I pity both!

∴ Fair: beautiful.

∴ Venus: the goddess of beauty and love in Roman mythology.

On one level, current means the stream of water. On the other level, the current here is the current of love.

He's speaking to Venus saying: your stream of water was the stream of love between the two lovers who had to cross to the other side in order to meet each other.

Student: what's the meaning of pour'd?

Professor: it means poured. Actually, when the poet omits a letter, he does so in order to weaken the pronunciation and omit a syllable.

• **Fair Venus! How I pity both!**

∴ Both: Hero and Leander.

Byron pitied the two lovers because of their difficulties; they had to meet at night and there were risks. They were separated in two different countries.

- Stanza number 3

- **For me, degenerate modem wretch,
Though in the genial month of May
My dripping limbs I faintly stretch,
And think I've done a feat to-day.**

He swam to the other side to see Hero. Of course Hero is not there when he wrote the poem (Laughs).

Why did he swim? Why did Byron cross the strait? Why did he take the trouble to cross the stream of water?

He wanted to show off and to tell us it was a very easy swim. He failed actually. Let's explain this stanza.

- **For me, degenerate modem wretch,**

∴ Degenerate: morally bad, immoral.

∴ Wretch: a miserable person.

He knows that he is immoral. He is admitting that he is immoral and miserable. He's describing himself as miserable because he had a disability; he had a deformed foot. In spite of his deformed foot, he is showing off and he is reminding us of his physical disability. Despite his physical disability, he swam to the other side.

- **Though in the genial month of May**

∴ Genial: warm

He took the swim in the warm month of May; in spring, unlike Leander who took the swim in December; in winter.

Byron took the swim and succeeded; he crossed the strait very easily and successfully.

- **My dripping limbs I faintly stretch,**

∴ Dripping (ينقط الماء). He's extremely wet.

∴ Limbs: refers to his body.

Notice how satirical he's being about the whole issue. This swim

was just like stretching for him. Faintly stretch means slightly stretching. This swim didn't need much strength.

- **And think I've done a feat to-day.**

∴ Feat: accomplishment, achievement.

I think to myself I've done an achievement by crossing the stream of water.

- Stanza number 4

- **But since he cross' d the rapid tide,**

He refers to Leander.

∴ Rapid: very fast.

∴ Tide: refers to the water.

- **According to the doubtful story,**

Byron described the story as doubtful because it is a myth.

- **To woo-and -Lord knows what beside,**

∴ Woo: to try to gain the love of someone, especially with a view to marriage.

Leander swam across the stream because he wanted to woo his beloved. This relationship between Leander and Hero is a very serious one.

Why is Byron doubtful about their story?

Byron says that Leander swam across the stream to woo Hero, and Lord knows what beside. Maybe there were other factors about the story which we know nothing about. Otherwise, he wouldn't take the risk to cross the stream in December.

Was it just a love story or were there other things? We don't actually know.

Why would they meet at night? Why couldn't they just marry and live happily? That's why Byron is doubting the story.

- **And swam for Love, as I for Glory;**

Leander swam out of love to meet his beloved on the other side. But I, Lord Byron, did it for glory. I did it to show off and to be proud about my skills in sports.

Student: Byron didn't believe in God, right?

Professor: maybe, we're not sure about that.

Student: I think Leander loved Hero but she didn't love him back, that's why he was so upset.

Professor: no, that's not correct. Actually, Hero used to wait for Leander on the other side. She used to have a lantern and wait for him at night. She held a lantern to show him the way but he couldn't make it. She loved him of course.

Student: why did Byron say "Lord knows what beside"?

Professor: I think Byron is projecting his own issues on these lovers. He is doubting love and the power of love.

Having looked at the lifestyle that he lived, Byron didn't believe in this kind of serious commitment. Why would any man -in Byron's mind- take such a journey and risk his life at night in December?

From the perspective of Byron, there were so many women who would wait for you on the same side of the river so why would you risk your life crossing it to the other side at night? Byron himself wouldn't do it for a woman because he wasn't a faithful person. He was not serious about love relationships; he was after sexual pleasures only.

- Stanza number 5

- **'Twere hard to say who fared the best:**

∴ Fared: performed.

It was hard to say who performed the best, me or Leander. He's saying this in a humorous way. He's making fun of Leander because Leander died. Byron is being sarcastic; it's a kind of a joke.

- **Sad mortals! Thus the Gods still plague you!**

∴ Sad mortals: Leander and Hero, especially Leander who died in the process.

∴ Plague you: curse you.

Plague as a noun means (الطاعون) but in this context it's used as a verb. He's saying that Leander and Hero were cursed by the gods. Maybe they were doing something wrong or immoral, and look who us preaching! Lord Byron himself!

- **He lost his labour, I my jest:**

∴ He: Leander.

∴ Jest: joke.

Leander lost his performance and his achievement. It was not even an achievement because he died. He lost his effort. I lost my joke. Let's see why he lost his joke:

- **For he was drown' d, and I've the ague.**

∴ Ague: fever, a shivering fit.

Leander lost his labour because he got drowned; I lost my joke because I have got the fever. Out of that swimming that Lord Byron performed twice (forth and backward), he got a shivering fit. Again, he's mocking Leander.

It's a satire. It's a satirical poem.

Figures of speech

✓ Alliteration => (dark, December) Line 1.

✓ Alliteration => (he, hero) Stanza 2.

✓ Allusion => fair Venus.

✓ Sestos and Abydos refer to Asia and Europe. This is a classical allusion or a historical allusion. Abydos refers to the European coast and Sestos refers to the Asian coast.

Rhyme scheme:

If in the month of dark December (a)

Leander, who was nightly wont (b)

(What maid will not the tale remember?) (a)

To cross thy stream, broad Hellespont! (b)

I think that Byron is not really fair or objective in his criticism of the whole story. Byron swam in spring whereas Leander took his swim in December. Furthermore, Byron didn't experience love.

Meter:

If in | the month | of dark | Decem|ber

1

2

3

4 => Iambic tetrameter.

Lean | der, who | was nigh | tly wont

1 2 3 4 => Iambic tetrameter.

As you see, there are 4 units. We call these units *feet*. A foot means (التفعيلة) in Arabic.

➤ We have three kinds of feet:

- Iambic : unstressed-stressed syllables.
- Trochaic : stressed-unstressed syllables.
- Spondaic : stressed-stressed syllables.

Each foot consists of *two syllables*.

In order to define the meter, we put every two syllables together and call them a poetic foot.

- If we have *one foot*, we call it monometer.
- If we have *two feet*, we call it dimeter.
- If we have *three feet*, we call it trimeter.
- If we have *four feet*, we call it tetrameter.
- If we have *five feet*, we call it pentameter.

By counting the number of syllables, we know how many feet -and therefore what kind of meter- we have.

➤ What is a meter?

It's the rhythm. When I talk about the meter then I'm talking about the melody and the rhythm.

نقوم بتحديد المقاطع المشددة والمقاطع المخففة. المقاطع المشددة هي الإيقاع وهي التي تحدد نوع البحر الشعري.

Student: Is it possible to face questions in the exam where we will have to define the meter?

Professor: yes, of course. I will give you a line of poetry from the poems that we've studied and ask you to define the meter.

Student: some poems have more than one meter.

Professor: correct. Some poems have different kinds of meter, such as Easter Wings by George Herbert. In that poem, each line has got a different meter. It's actually a shape poem.

Student: other poems might not have meter at all.

Professor: exactly. Blank verse for example has neither meter nor rhyme scheme.

In some cases, there might even be two meters in one verse. For example, the meter is iambic and suddenly it becomes spondaic in the same line. We call this *metric substitution*.

- Examples of spondaic: I scream, I shout, out out. When the poet uses spondaic, there must be something important because the spondaic is very strong.

Let's go back to Song to Althea from Prison by Richard Lovelace. We will translate the first stanza.

To Althea, from Prison
When love with unconfined wings.
Hovers within my gates,
And my divine Althea brings
To whisper at the grates;
When I lie tangled in her hair,
And fettered to her eye,
The gods that wanton in the air
Know no such liberty.

Student: why do we have metaphor in the first line?

Professor: he's comparing love to a bird.

Student: "And my divine Althea brings" there is anastrophe.

Professor: correct, it should be "and brings my divine Althea".

- ∴ Unconfined: (حر طليق)
- ∴ Hovers: (يحوم)
- ∴ Gates: (بوابات)
- ∴ Divine: (سماوي، إلهي)
- ∴ Grates: (قضبان)
- ∴ Tangled: (متشابك)
- ∴ Fettered: (مقيد)
- ∴ Wanton: (يعبث، يلهو)

To Althea, from Prison

إلى ألثيا، من السجن

When love with unconfined wings.

Hovers within my gates,

عندما يحوم الحب بأجنحته حراً طليقاً
داخل أبواب زنراتي

And my divine Althea brings
To whisper at the grates;

ويأتي بملاكي الطاهر الشيا
لتهمس من خلف القضبان
أو (ويأتي لي بحبيبي الملائكية
لنتهامس من وراء القضبان)

When I lie tangled in her hair,
And fettered to her eye,

عندما تضمني صفانرها
وتأسرني عيناها

The gods that wanton in the air
Know no such liberty.

حتى الآلهة التي تلهو في السماء
لا تعرف حرية مثل هذه.

NB:

Dr Amal al-Eid corrected lines 5 and 6 of this poem. She replaced the words "hair" and "eye" by one another. The stanza becomes as mentioned above.

*

About the exam:

- There will be a question about the vocabularies.
- عادةً أعطيكُم بيتاً شعرياً وأطلب منكم تحديد اسم الشاعر. قد يأتي سؤال الترجمة عوضاً عن هذا السؤال.
- القصائد المطلوبة للترجمة هي فقط التي قمنا بترجمتها خلال المحاضرات.
- There will be questions about poets' lives.

- المعلومات التاريخية المطلوبة حصراً من الكتاب حتى لو توسعت فيها خلال المحاضرات.

- The questions are all MCQ questions. (multiple choice questions).

- I will try to make the exam about 45 to 50 questions.

- There will be a whole question about the figures of speech.

- You will be asked about the meters.

- ستجدون أسئلة عن المعنى أو الفكرة الرئيسية للقصيدة. مثال:

Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos للشاعر Lord Byron، ماهي الفكرة التي ناقشها الشاعر؟

Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos (أن تعرفوا أن قصيدة) هي (satire) أو (satirical poem) و قصيدة (Nutting) هي (narrative) (poem).

- Remember that George Herbert's *Jordan* is a poem about poetry.

Thank You

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Wish you all the best



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