

ENGLISH
IV semester BCOM

Anthology of poems

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ETHICS

Linda Pastan

In this poem Linda Pastan speaks about her experience and understanding of the true meaning of Ethics. She recollects her school days when her Ethics teacher would ask the same question to her students every autumn. The teacher would ask her students whom would they save if there were a fire in the museum, a Rembrandt painting or an old woman who hadn't many years to live?

The students would be restless on hard chairs and give answers half heartedly, without understanding the significance of the question. As they cared very little for art or life, they would choose one year for life and the next year for art. At times they imagined the old woman to be their grandmother who had left her usual kitchen to wander in the museum. Another year Linda tried to suggest letting the woman decide for herself, but the teacher warns her not to escape from her responsibility of making a choice.

Years later in an autumn Linda visits a museum and stands before a real Rembrandt painting. She is surprised to see the beauty of the painting whose colors were so dark and radiant. The unmatched beauty of the painting was truly worth saving, at the same time she stood in the place of the old woman. She then realizes that the teacher's true intention in posing the question that woman, painting and seasons are all equally important and they are beyond saving by children. She understands that ethics comes with the experience that one has in their lives.

No More Hiroshimas

James Falconer Kirkup

James Falconer Kirkup was a poet, translator and travel-writer who was born in England. After a few years of an eventful life in the island, he travelled through and resided in Europe, America, Far East and finally reached Japan where he settled for 30 years and taught English Literature in several Universities. No More Hiroshima's is his famous poem in which he reveals to the world the commercialized post-war faces of Japan.

In the poem we see the poet arriving at a railway station in the reconstructed city of Hiroshima. He quite forgets which city it is, since all looks similar in the post-war Japan. It resembles any other town in Japan, since all towns are noisy, muddy ramshackles alike after the war. In the dim dew-falling evening, he walks towards the city proper. Neon exhibits of traders attract his attention. They are advertising Atomic Lotion for hair fallout. It looks ridiculous to the much travelled poet, but the pain and frustration of those whose hair fallout rapidly daily is known only to those who experience it.

Whatever had remained unsellable for centuries in the pure and proud tradition of the Japanese were being made sellable to attract tourists, the sustaining revenue of a wrecked nation. He passes the rows of fruit stalls and meat stalls, observing the scenes around him on his way and finally reaches the river. The face of Hiroshima was changing. Losses were recompensed and destructions repaired. Everything was being restored or rehabilitated to its former position. But the river alone 'remains unchanged and sad, refusing any kind of rehabilitation.' The river symbolizes the stream of life in the city. Once polluted, it can never be rehabilitated into its former position. 'It was the pride of a bold peasantry that was broken and hurt.'

In the city proper, the poet finds life splendid, busy and ornamental. People seem to have forgotten what had happened. In some shops, cheaply decorated mini models of the famous, bombed Industry Promotion Hall are on display for sale. The indecent modernity of the tourist hotel in which he stays displeases him. The very twisted stair cases which have witnessed the heavy blast appear that they may collapse and fall anytime. He feels 'the contemporary stairs treacherous, the corridors deserted, his room in the hotel an overheated mortuary and the bar, a bar in darkness.' It should be specially noted here that the traveler poet is uncertain as to whether he should grieve or relish the unrepaired state of the heavily damaged and dilapidated hotel of his stay. The traveler in him craves for comfort and the poet in him longs for nostalgic status-quo.

When a nation and a people feel that they are wronged, it is common consensus that they have a right to be angry. But in the city of Hiroshima the poet sees that it was evident that the people forgot everything too soon. Their sorrow seems short-lived. He is angry that their anger too is dead. He is plain to speak that anger should not die and should be kept alive till war-destructions are avenged. But in Japan, instead, atomic peace was seen geared to meet the demands of the tourists' trade. War relics were renovated for promoting tourism industry, adding new charm, loveliness and nobility to those relics. But the poet feels that this renovation is a shame and indignity to those relics. As indignant already, they are beyond all hope of further indignation by anyone.

It is when he reaches the Park Of Peace that the emotional poet finds something perfectly appealing to his orthodox tastes. It is the only place in Hiroshima City that rouses respect in his mind. It is a monument for the children who were blasted away by mankind's crime. The various exhibits in the War Memorial Museum moved him and he wept. Melted bricks and slates, photos of various scenes after the blast and other relics of the explosion were arranged there for the entire world to see. The other relics which made the poet weep were stop-watches all stuck at that destined

time, burnt clothing, charred boots, twisted buttons, ripped kimonos, atomic rain-perforated blouses and the cotton pants in which blasted boys crawled to their homes to bleed and breathe their last. According to the poet, they are the only memorials of the war, worth viewing. When we come to this part of the poem, we are not inclined but forced to agree with the poet in that war remains shall not be sold and grief commercialized, however poor we are. The poet has perfectly convinced us of this.

THE SECOND COMING

W.B. YEATS

“The Second Coming” is one of Yeats’s most famous and most anthologized poems. Because of its stunning, violent imagery and terrifying ritualistic language. The poet is greatly distressed after the violence and death in the world war and feels that it is time for God to take birth on earth to restore peace.

The speaker describes a nightmarish scene of the falcon, that is "turning" in a "widening gyre" until it can no longer "hear the falconer," its human master. The second part of the line, a declaration that "the centre cannot hold," is full of political implications. He describes a situation of violence and terror through phrases like "anarchy," "blood-dimmed tide," and "innocence drowned".

Yeats is talking about "the good" and "the bad." For one thing, if "the best lack all conviction," can they really be that good? On the other hand, "the worst" have all the "intensity" on their side, which is good for them, but definitely not for everyone else. Things are so messed up that you can't tell the good and the bad apart. All this violence and moral confusion means "the Second Coming is at hand." According to the Bible, that means Christ is going to come back and set everything straight.

The poet imagines a vast desert and a beast with lion body and the head of a man. He's talking about The Spiritus Mundi, the original, archetypal symbol of the sphinx that first inspired the Egyptians to build the Sphinx in the desert, and which is now inspiring him. He describes the sphinx's expression as "pitiless," an inhuman expression that is as indifferent as nature itself. It is "blank," and incapable of having empathy with other humans. The shadow of the birds as they fly in circles is an indication that something will die soon. The beast wakes up from a stony sleep of 2000 years, as it did not get its chance. It now moves its stony thighs very slowly and slouches towards Bethlehem to be born. It is believed that the beast, even though it is described as "rough," might not be evil, but merely a manifestation of the kind of harsh justice that society as a whole deserves.

TWO TRAMPS IN MUD TIME

Robert Frost.

On the surface, "Two Tramps in Mud Time" seems to display Robert Frost's narrow individualism. The poem as a whole also does not appear to have a single definable theme. At one point, the narrator seems wholly self-important, and then turns to the power and beauty of nature. It is, however, in the final third of the poem where the narrator reveals his true thoughts to the reader, bringing resolution to the poem as a single entity

At the outset of the poem, the narrator gives a very superficial view of himself. He is chopping wood in his yard and is almost seeming angered when one of the tramps interferes with his wood chopping: indicating the apparent selfishness and arrogance of the narrator. He understands that the tramps intend to take the job from him. The narrator refers to releasing his suppressed anger not upon evils that threaten "the common good", but upon the "unimportant wood". He enjoys the way the wood fell in blocks as he chopped them. The weather, the grip on the earth and the feel of his muscles was perfect for chopping wood.

Unexpectedly, the narrator then turns toward nature, apparently abandoning his initial train of thought. He reveals the unpredictability of nature, saying that even in the middle of spring, it can be "two months back in the middle of March." the arrival of the bluebird would to most indicate the arrival of spring, yet he wouldn't advise a thing to blossom. During summer we search for water with a witching wand while in rainy season every print of a hoof is a pond and every wheel rut a brook. The narrator points to the conclusion that, while on the surface, things appear to be one thing, there is always something hidden below, much like The lurking frost in the earth.

In the final three stanzas of the poem, the true self of the narrator comes to the surface. The humility of the narrator comes to light, with the

narrator saying that the tramps' right to chop wood for a living was the better right. The narrator also admits his foolishness as it was easy for the tramps to understand his skill of chopping wood just in the way he held his axe.

On the surface, the poem seems to be two poems with diverging themes. However, Robert Frost guides these two apparently unrelated thoughts into one idea from the heart, his object in living is to unite one's avocation and vocation, just as two eyes make one in sight . His final message is any job one pursues must give him the joy of a hobby. Only when one enjoys his profession will he become successful in life.