

SUB CODE: 18PEL1 BRITISH LITERATURE –I

UNIT – 1

Epithalamion EDMUND SPENSER

Ye learned sisters which have oftentimes
Beene to me ayding, others to adorne:
Whom ye thought worthy of your gracefull rymes,
That even the greatest did not greatly scorne
To heare theyr names sung in your simple layes,
But joyed in theyr prayse.
And when ye list your owne mishaps to mourne,
Which death, or love, or fortunes wreck did rayse,
Your string could soone to sadder tenor turne,
And teach the woods and waters to lament
Your dolefull dreriment.
Now lay those sorrowfull complaints aside,
And having all your heads with girland crownd,
Helpe me mine owne loves prayses to resound,
Ne let the same of any be envie:
So Orpheus did for his owne bride,
So I unto my selfe alone will sing,
The woods shall to me answer and my Eccho ring.

Early before the worlds light giving lampe,
His golden beame upon the hils doth spred,
Having disperst the nights unchearefull dampe,
Doe ye awake, and with fresh lusty hed,
Go to the bowre of my beloved love,
My truest turtle dove,
Bid her awake; for Hymen is awake,
And long since ready forth his maske to move,
With his bright Tead that flames with many a flake,
And many a bachelor to waite on him,

In theyr fresh garments trim.
Bid her awake therefore and soone her dight,
For lo the wished day is come at last,
That shall for al the paynes and sorrowes past,
Pay to her usury of long delight:
And whylest she doth her dight,
Doe ye to her of joy and solace sing,
That all the woods may answer and your eccho ring.

Bring with you all the Nymphes that you can heare
Both of the rivers and the forrests greene:
And of the sea that neighbours to her neare,
Al with gay girlands goodly wel beseene.
And let them also with them bring in hand
Another gay girland
For my fayre love of lillyes and of roses,
Bound truelove wize with a blew silke riband.
And let them make great store of bridale poses,
And let them eeke bring store of other flowers
To deck the bridale bowers.
And let the ground whereas her foot shall tread,
For feare the stones her tender foot should wrong
Be strewed with fragrant flowers all along,
And diapred lyke the discolored mead.
Which done, doe at her chamber dore awayt,
For she will waken strayt,
The whiles doe ye this song unto her sing,
The woods shall to you answer and your Eccho ring.

Ye Nymphes of Mulla which with carefull heed,
The silver scaly trouts doe tend full well,
And greedy pikes which use therein to feed,

(Those trouts and pikes all others doo excell)
And ye likewise which keepe the rushy lake,
Where none doo fishes take,
Bynd up the locks the which hang scatterd light,
And in his waters which your mirror make,
Behold your faces as the christall bright,
That when you come whereas my love doth lie,
No blemish she may spie.
And eke ye lightfoot mayds which keepe the deere,
That on the hoary mountayne use to towre,
And the wylde wolves which seeke them to devoure,
With your steele darts doo chace from comming neer,
Be also present heere,
To helpe to decke her and to help to sing,
That all the woods may answer and your eccho ring.

Wake, now my love, awake; for it is time,
The Rosy Morne long since left Tithones bed,
All ready to her silver coche to clyme,
And Phoebus gins to shew his glorious hed.
Hark how the cheerefull birds do chaunt theyr laies
And carroll of loves praise.
The merry Larke hir mattins sings aloft,
The thrush replies, the Mavis descant plays,
The Ouzell shrills, the Ruddock warbles soft,
So goodly all agree with sweet consent,
To this dayes merriment.
Ah my deere love why doe ye sleepe thus long,
When meeter were that ye should now awake,
T'awayt the comming of your joyous make,
And hearken to the birds lovelearned song,
The deawy leaves among.

For they of joy and pleasance to you sing,
That all the woods them answer and theyr eccho ring.

My love is now awake out of her dreames,
And her fayre eyes like stars that dimmed were
With darksome cloud, now shew theyr goodly beames
More bright then Hesperus his head doth rere.
Come now ye damzels, daughters of delight,
Helpe quickly her to dight,
But first come ye fayre houres which were begot
In Joves sweet paradice, of Day and Night,
Which doe the seasons of the yeare allot,
And al that ever in this world is fayre
Doe make and still repayre.
And ye three handmayds of the Cyprian Queene,
The which doe still adorne her beauties pride,
Helpe to adorne my beautifullest bride:
And as ye her array, still throw betweene
Some graces to be seene,
And as ye use to Venus, to her sing,
The whiles the woods shal answer and your eccho ring.

Now is my love all ready forth to come,
Let all the virgins therefore well awayt,
And ye fresh boyes that tend upon her groome
Prepare your selves; for he is comming strayt.
Set all your things in seemely good aray
Fit for so joyfull day,
The joyfullst day that ever sunne did see.
Faire Sun, shew forth thy favourable ray,
And let thy lifull heat not fervent be
For feare of burning her sunshyny face,

Her beauty to disgrace.
O fayrest Phoebus, father of the Muse,
If ever I did honour thee aright,
Or sing the thing, that mote thy mind delight,
Doe not thy servants simple boone refuse,
But let this day let this one day be myne,
Let all the rest be thine.
Then I thy soverayne prayses loud will sing,
That all the woods shal answer and theyr eccho ring.

Harke how the Minstrels gin to shrill aloud
Their merry Musick that resounds from far,
The pipe, the tabor, and the trembling Croud,
That well agree withouten breach or jar.
But most of all the Damzels doe delite,
When they their tymbrels smyte,
And thereunto doe daunce and carrol sweet,
That all the sences they doe ravish quite,
The whyles the boyes run up and downe the street,
Crying aloud with strong confused noyce,
As if it were one voyce.
Hymen io Hymen, Hymen they do shout,
That even to the heavens theyr shouting shrill
Doth reach, and all the firmament doth fill,
To which the people standing all about,
As in approvance doe thereto applaud
And loud advaunce her laud,
And evermore they Hymen Hymen sing,
That al the woods them answer and theyr eccho ring.

Loe where she comes along with portly pace
Lyke Phoebe from her chamber of the East,

Arsing forth to run her mighty race,
Clad all in white, that seemes a virgin best.
So well it her beseemes that ye would weene
Some angell she had beene.
Her long loose yellow locks lyke golden wyre,
Sprinckled with perle, and perling flowres a tweene,
Doe lyke a golden mantle her attyre,
And being crowned with a girland greene,
Seeme lyke some mayden Queene.
Her modest eyes abashed to behold
So many gazers, as on her do stare,
Upon the lowly ground affixed are.
Ne dare lift up her countenance too bold,
But blush to heare her prayses sung so loud,
So farre from being proud.
Nathlesse doe ye still loud her prayses sing,
That all the woods may answer and your eccho ring.

Tell me ye merchants daughters did ye see
So fayre a creature in your towne before?
So sweet, so lovely, and so mild as she,
Adornd with beautyes grace and vertues store,
Her goodly eyes lyke Saphyres shining bright,
Her forehead yvory white,
Her cheekes lyke apples which the sun hath rudded,
Her lips lyke cheryes charming men to byte,
Her brest like to a bowle of creame uncrudded,
Her paps lyke lyllies budded,
Her snowie necke lyke to a marble towre,
And all her body like a pallace fayre,
Ascending uppe with many a stately stayre,
To honors seat and chastities sweet bowre.

Why stand ye still ye virgins in amaze,
Upon her so to gaze,
Whiles ye forget your former lay to sing,
To which the woods did answer and your eccho ring.

But if ye saw that which no eyes can see,
The inward beauty of her lively spright,
Garnisht with heavenly guifts of high degree,
Much more then would ye wonder at that sight,
And stand astonisht lyke to those which red
Medusaes mazeful hed.
There dwels sweet love and constant chastity,
Unspotted fayth and comely womenhed,
Regard of honour and mild modesty,
There vertue raynes as Queene in royal throne,
And giveth lawes alone.
The which the base affections doe obay,
And yeeld theyr services unto her will,
Ne thought of thing uncomely ever may
Thereto approch to tempt her mind to ill.
Had ye once seene these her celestial treasures,
And unrevealed pleasures,
Then would ye wonder and her prayses sing,
That al the woods should answer and your eccho ring.

Open the temple gates unto my love,
Open them wide that she may enter in,
And all the postes adorne as doth behove,
And all the pillours deck with girlands trim,
For to recyve this Saynt with honour dew,
That commeth in to you.
With trembling steps and humble reverence,

She commeth in, before th'almighties vew:
Of her ye virgins learne obedience,
When so ye come into those holy places,
To humble your proud faces;
Bring her up to th'high altar that she may,
The sacred ceremonies there partake,
The which do endlesse matrimony make,
And let the roring Organs loudly play
The praises of the Lord in lively notes,
The whiles with hollow throates
The Choristers the joyous Antheme sing,
That al the woods may answeare and their eccho ring.

Behold whiles she before the altar stands
Hearing the holy priest that to her speakes
And blesseth her with his two happy hands,
How the red roses flush up in her cheekes,
And the pure snow with goodly vermill stayne,
Like crimson dyde in grayne,
That even th'Angels which continually,
About the sacred Altare doe remaine,
Forget their service and about her fly,
Ofte peeping in her face that seemes more fayre,
The more they on it stare.
But her sad eyes still fastened on the ground,
Are governed with goodly modesty,
That suffers not one looke to glaunce awry,
Which may let in a little thought unsownd.
Why blush ye love to give to me your hand,
The pledge of all our band?
Sing ye sweet Angels, Alleluya sing,
That all the woods may answeare and your eccho ring.

Now al is done; bring home the bride againe,
Bring home the triumph of our victory,
Bring home with you the glory of her gaine,
With joyance bring her and with jollity.
Never had man more joyfull day then this,
Whom heaven would heape with blis.
Make feast therefore now all this live long day,
This day for ever to me holy is,
Poure out the wine without restraint or stay,
Poure not by cups, but by the belly full,
Poure out to all that wull,
And sprinkle all the postes and wals with wine,
That they may sweat, and drunken be withall.
Crowne ye God Bacchus with a coronall,
And Hymen also crowne with wreathes of vine,
And let the Graces daunce unto the rest;
For they can doo it best:
The whiles the maydens doe theyr carroll sing,
To which the woods shal answer and theyr eccho ring.

Ring ye the bells, ye yong men of the towne,
And leave your wonted labors for this day:
This day is holy; doe ye write it downe,
That ye for ever it remember may.
This day the sunne is in his chiefest hight,
With Barnaby the bright,
From whence declining daily by degrees,
He somewhat loseth of his heat and light,
When once the Crab behind his back he sees.
But for this time it ill ordained was,
To chose the longest day in all the yeare,

And shortest night, when longest fitter weare:
Yet never day so long, but late would passe.
Ring ye the bells, to make it weare away,
And bonefiers make all day,
And daunce about them, and about them sing:
That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Ah when will this long weary day have end,
And lende me leave to come unto my love?
How slowly do the houres theyr numbers spend?
How slowly does sad Time his feathers move?
Hast thee O fayrest Planet to thy home
Within the Westerne fome:
Thy tyred steedes long since have need of rest.
Long though it be, at last I see it gloome,
And the bright evening star with golden creast
Appeare out of the East.
Fayre childe of beauty, glorious lampe of love
That all the host of heaven in rankes doost lead,
And guydest lovers through the nightes dread,
How chearefully thou lookest from above,
And seemst to laugh atweene thy twinkling light
As joying in the sight
Of these glad many which for joy doe sing,
That all the woods them answer and their echo ring.

Now cease ye damsels your delights forepast;
Enough is it, that all the day was youres:
Now day is doen, and night is nighing fast:
Now bring the Bryde into the brydall boures.
Now night is come, now soone her disaray,
And in her bed her lay;

Lay her in lillies and in violets,
And silken courteins over her display,
And odour'd sheetes, and Arras coverlets.
Behold how goodly my faire love does ly
In proud humility;
Like unto Maia, when as Jove her tooke,
In Tempe, lying on the flowry gras,
Twixt sleepe and wake, after she weary was,
With bathing in the Acidalian brooke.
Now it is night, ye damsels may be gon,
And leave my love alone,
And leave likewise your former lay to sing:
The woods no more shal answeere, nor your echo ring.

Now welcome night, thou night so long expected,
That long daies labour doest at last defray,
And all my cares, which cruell love collected,
Hast sumd in one, and cancelled for aye:
Spread thy broad wing over my love and me,
That no man may us see,
And in thy sable mantle us enwrap,
From feare of perrill and foule horror free.
Let no false treason seeke us to entrap,
Nor any dread disquiet once annoy
The safety of our joy:
But let the night be calme and quiet some,
Without tempestuous storms or sad afray:
Lyke as when Jove with fayre Alcmena lay,
When he begot the great Tirynthian groome:
Or lyke as when he with thy selfe did lie,
And begot Majesty.
And let the mayds and yongmen cease to sing:

Ne let the woods them answer, nor theyr eccho ring.

Let no lamenting cryes, nor dolefull teares,
Be heard all night within nor yet without:
Ne let false whispers, breeding hidden feares,
Breake gentle sleepe with misconceived dout.
Let no deluding dreames, nor dreadful sights
Make sudden sad affrights;
Ne let housefyres, nor lightnings helpelesse harmes,
Ne let the Pouke, nor other evill sprights,
Ne let mischivous witches with theyr charmes,
Ne let hob Goblins, names whose sence we see not,
Fray us with things that be not.
Let not the shriech Oule, nor the Storke be heard:
Nor the night Raven that still deadly yels,
Nor damned ghosts cald up with mighty spells,
Nor griesly vultures make us once affeard:
Ne let th'unpleasant Quayre of Frogs still croking
Make us to wish theyr choking.
Let none of these theyr dreary accents sing;
Ne let the woods them answer, nor theyr eccho ring.

But let stil Silence trew night watches keepe,
That sacred peace may in assurance rayne,
And tymely sleep, when it is tyme to sleepe,
May poure his limbs forth on your pleasant playne,
The whiles an hundred little winged loves,
Like divers fethered doves,
Shall fly and flutter round about your bed,
And in the secret darke, that none reproves,
Their prety stelthes shal worke, and snares shal spread
To filch away sweet snatches of delight,

Conceald through covert night.
Ye sonnes of Venus, play your sports at will,
For greedy pleasure, carelesse of your toyes,
Thinks more upon her paradise of joyes,
Then what ye do, albe it good or ill.
All night therefore attend your merry play,
For it will soone be day:
Now none doth hinder you, that say or sing,
Ne will the woods now answer, nor your Eccho ring.

Who is the same, which at my window peepes?
Or whose is that faire face, that shines so bright,
Is it not Cinthia, she that never sleepes,
But walkes about high heaven al the night?
O fayrest goddesse, do thou not envy
My love with me to spy:
For thou likewise didst love, though now unthought,
And for a fleece of woll, which privily,
The Latmian shephard once unto thee brought,
His pleasures with thee wrought.
Therefore to us be favorable now;
And sith of wemens labours thou hast charge,
And generation goodly dost enlarge,
Encline thy will t'effect our wishfull vow,
And the chast wombe informe with timely seed,
That may our comfort breed:
Till which we cease our hopefull hap to sing,
Ne let the woods us answeare, nor our Eccho ring.

And thou great Juno, which with awful might
The lawes of wedlock still dost patronize,
And the religion of the faith first plight

With sacred rites hast taught to solemnize:
And eeke for comfort often called art
Of women in their smart,
Eternally bind thou this lovely band,
And all thy blessings unto us impart.
And thou glad Genius, in whose gentle hand,
The bridale bowre and geniall bed remaine,
Without blemish or staine,
And the sweet pleasures of theyr loves delight
With secret ayde doest succour and supply,
Till they bring forth the fruitfull progeny,
Send us the timely fruit of this same night.
And thou fayre Hebe, and thou Hymen free,
Grant that it may so be.
Til which we cease your further prayse to sing,
Ne any woods shal answer, nor your Eccho ring.

And ye high heavens, the temple of the gods,
In which a thousand torches flaming bright
Doe burne, that to us wretched earthly clods,
In dreadful darknesse lend desired light;
And all ye powers which in the same remayne,
More then we men can fayne,
Poure out your blessing on us plentiously,
And happy influence upon us raine,
That we may raise a large posterity,
Which from the earth, which they may long possesse,
With lasting happinesse,
Up to your haughty pallaces may mount,
And for the guerdon of theyr glorious merit
May heavenly tabernacles there inherit,
Of blessed Saints for to increase the count.

So let us rest, sweet love, in hope of this,
And cease till then our tymely joyes to sing,
The woods no more us answer, nor our eccho ring.

Song made in lieu of many ornaments,
With which my love should duly have bene dect,
Which cutting off through hasty accidents,
Ye would not stay your dew time to expect,
But promist both to recompens,
Be unto her a goodly ornament,
And for short time an endlesse monument.

Introduction

Epithalamion is a poem of 433 iambic lines of varying lengths, divided into twenty-three stanzas and an envoi—twenty-four sections in all. The title means, literally, “at the nuptial chamber,” from the Greek (epi and thalamos); the poem celebrates the twenty-four hours of the poet’s wedding day. The poem is written in the first person, and much of it is addressed to the Muses, nymphs, other bridal attendants, and wedding guests. The twenty-four sections do not correspond precisely to the twenty-four hours of the wedding day, yet the poem moves chronologically through the entire day.

In the first stanza, the poet speaks to the Muses, who have often inspired him in the past, asking that they “Helpe me mine owne loves prayes to resound.” Edmund Spenser quite often begins his works this way, with the poet/narrator requesting divine assistance as he undertakes a task that is beyond his mortal skills. His bride is so magnificent, it is implied, that he cannot find words to describe her. The next three stanzas anticipate the awakening of the bride on her wedding day. The poet beckons the Muses to wake her, and to summon nymphs from land and sea to bring garlands and flowers to adorn the bride and her chamber. In stanzas 5 and 6, she awakens and is dressed for the wedding.

“Now is my love all ready forth to come,” the poet announces, and he is ready, too. He then invokes the sun, praying that its lifegiving rays will brighten this joyful day without burning his bride’s bright “sunshyny face.” The wedding musicians play, boys run through the streets shouting, and the wedding guests clamour until finally, in stanza 9 (nearly 150 lines into the poem), the bride appears. She is “like Phoebe,” like “some angell,” like “some mayden Queene.” Addressing the women around the bride, the poet declares that, much as they admire her physical beauty, they would stand amazed at the “inward beauty” of her spirit. “Open the temple gates,” the poet demands, and the marriage ceremony actually takes place, in stanzas 12 and 13—the centre of the poem.

During the ceremony, the bride blushes in purity and modesty, impressing even the angels. When the ceremony is over, the groom’s thoughts turn to celebration, to wine and dancing—but only for one stanza. By stanza 15 he is impatient for the wedding day to end and the wedding night to begin. “Ah when will this long weary day have end,/ And lende me leave to come unto my love?” he asks. Again he turns his attention to the Muses and nymphs, asking them now to stop celebrating and to help the bride prepare for bed. Repeatedly he complains that the day has been long and tiring.

In stanzas 18 through 20 he asks the night to provide a mantle of privacy for the couple and cautions various creatures to remain quiet so as not to disturb them as they enjoy “sweet snatches of delight.” When the moon rises, in stanza 21, the poet asks her and other goddesses and gods to bless the couple with happiness and fertility.

The poem has a mythological frame; both human beings and gods are wedding guests, but in stanza 10, the bride is given a blazon, a head-to-toe description of her beauty borrowed from the conventions of the Petrarchan sonnet. Spenser’s bride is first a “mayden Queene,” then her neck is like a “marble towre” and her body a “pallace fayre,” but Spenser never lets the reader forget the sensuousness of the occasion. The lips of his bride are “lyke cheryes charming men to byte,” her breast like a

“bowle of creame uncrudded.” This magnificent celebration of wedded love concludes with Spenser’s prayer that his poem, “in lieu of many ornaments,” will be to his wife a “goodly ornament,” and that his consecration of their marriage in song will be “for short time an endlesse monument.”

Summary

Edmund Spenser’s Epithalamion (published in 1595) is a poem in 24 stanzas about the poet’s wedding to one Elizabeth Boyle.

On the day of his wedding, the poem’s speaker calls upon the muses. They have often inspired him with verse, he says, so he now asks them to assist him in singing the praises of his love and preparing for the wedding. It is not yet dawn when he asks the muses to wake his bride after gathering lilies, roses, and flowers of all kinds to prepare her bower and her path for the moment when she awakes. The poet then calls directly upon the nymphs who care for various facets of nature’s beauty to come to help prepare his bride and to sing to her.

The groom next addresses his bride herself, urging her to awake. All nature is singing in affirmation, he tells her, of the day’s joyous event. Asking why she still sleeps, he invokes various divine attendants to assist in preparation. He prays to Phoebus Apollo, father of the muses, asking that this particular day be given to the poet and promising to then praise Phoebus with loud singing.

The groom turns his description to his bride’s procession and her beauty. Much music, singing, and dancing anticipates her coming forth. She appears, dressed in white that he says is so appropriate to her virginity that one might think she were an angel. The poet tells the daughters of merchants to consider his bride’s beauty: her golden hair, her modest countenance, her eyes, cheeks, lips, breasts, neck, and figure, shining in perfect purity so that other virgins stand in amazement to look at her. Her inner beauty, he tells them, is even more glorious. The virtues of love, chastity, faith, respect, and modesty rule her heart and keep

temptation far from her mind. If only they could see those invisible virtues, he says, they would be filled with wonder and song.

The groom then calls for the church to be opened for the bride’s entrance to the ceremony itself. He instructs the attendant maidens to observe and learn from his bride’s reverence. The bride is brought to the altar for the ceremony, as music plays in praise of the Lord. She blushes as the priest blesses her; even the angels attending the altar are distracted by the beauty of her face. The poet asks his bride why she so shyly takes his hand in oath.

Once the ceremony is complete, the celebration commences. The new husband cries to all those in attendance, telling them to rejoice, to let the feasting begin, to pour the wine, and to ring the bells. He laments that this day, midsummer’s day, is the longest day and shortest night of the year; thus, the hours until they can consummate the marriage are passing too slowly. At last, the evening star appears, twinkling with gladness for their sakes.

The celebration concludes as darkness approaches. The groom calls for his bride to be escorted to the bower. He addresses the night, asking it to wrap the newlyweds together in peaceful darkness, free of fear or trouble or tears. He urges that nothing, whether whispers, dreams, evil spirits, birds, or frogs, make any disturbance, calling for complete silence as they spend their first night together. The groom next turns his song into a prayer for a blessing upon his bride’s womb and their offspring, petitioning various deities overseeing marriage or procreation, including Juno, Genius, and Hymen. He closes the poem by addressing the song itself, commissioning it to serve as a decoration for and monument to his bride.

Theme

Epithalamion by Edmund Spenser has three main themes: marriage, the adoration of the bride from the perspective of the groom, and mythology. These themes are present in the poem by design.

This is because an epithalamion is a Greek-rooted term that means “before the bridal chamber.” Therefore, a epithalamion poem is meant to be about and in celebration of a wedding.

The poem features vivid descriptions of the bride’s beauty, called a blazon, and a wish that the poem becomes akin to a priceless ornament cherished by the future-wife. The poem also features an imagining of the wedding in which both gods and humans attend.

Edmund Spenser references Orpheus and other mythological figures. This gives the poem and the wedding event itself a cosmically royal atmosphere. The insertion of the mythical element in Epithalamion also gives the occasion a sort of blessing for it to be long-lasting and happy.

Discuss “Epithalamion” as a marriage hymn.

“Epithalamion” is a long lyric poem written by Edmund Spenser in celebration of his marriage to Elizabeth Boyle. The word itself means “marriage song,” coming from two Greek words that mean “upon” and “bridal chamber.” It is easy to follow the poem once one understands that each of the twenty-four stanzas represents an hour of the couple’s wedding day. The first few stanzas anticipate the bride awakening, but she is still asleep and dreaming. At the fifth and sixth stanzas, she awakes, and then she dresses for the occasion of the wedding ceremony. Throughout the first half of the poem, Spenser invokes many Greek gods and goddesses to help prepare for the wedding. For example, he calls upon some to help dress “my beautifullest bride.” In the eighth stanza, boys run up and down the street hailing Hymen, the god of marriage.

At stanza twelve, Spenser urges the wedding attendants to “bring her up to th’high altar that she may the sacred ceremonies there partake, the which do endlesse matrimony make.” At this point, Christian allusions replace the Greek references. In stanza thirteen, she takes her vows and angels sing alleluia. In the following stanza, the bride is brought to her

joyous husband’s home. Maidens sing and bells toll. Eventually the party ends, and the two lovers are left alone to enjoy their wedding night.

The entire poem is a recounting in flowery language, full of Greek and Christian allusions, of the joyous wedding day. It is indeed a song, or hymn, celebrating marriage. Spenser wrote it as a tribute to his own marriage, but by extension, it can be interpreted as an homage to the tradition of matrimony and the uniting of a man and woman in a lifelong loving relationship.

What are the symbols used in Spenser’s epithalamion?

The Epithalamion is a beautiful love poem by the famous Renaissance poet Edmund Spenser that celebrates his intense courtship and marriage to Elizabeth Boyle.

Epithalamion is known for its rich and powerful sensual symbolism and imagery, which have a reflection from classical myths and legends. This can be illustrated by the following examples:

A striking feature of the poem is its 24 stanzas as well as a total of 365 lines, which represent 24 hours of a day and 365 days of a year. Moreover, the first 16 stanzas have a celebratory tone while the last 8 have a restful tone, which again correspond to the 16 hours of Irish daytime at Summer Solstice and the remaining 8 hours of night.

NOW cease ye damsels your delights forepast;
Enough is it, that all the day was youres:
Now day is doen, and night is nighing fast:
Now bring the Bryde into the brydall boures.
Now night is come, now soone her disaray,
And in her bed her lay;
Lay her in lillies and in violets,

The description of physical beauty of his lover, Elizabeth (and her body parts) also makes use of powerful symbolism. For instance, her cheeks are referred to as red apples, her eyes as Saphyres (that shine very brightly), her lips like cherries, her breasts like a bowl of white cream, and

the nipples like lilies etc. The poem, is in fact, full of such seductive descriptions.

Consider the lines “The merry Larke hir matins sings...dayes merriment...” from the 5th stanza. Spenser makes use of the conventional symbol of courting birds. The birds are singing their mating tunes, which seems to be a part of the poet’s wedding tunes.

The “daughters of delight” from the 6th stanza refers to bridesmaids who represent blessings for the marriage.

In stanza 8, the mention of Phoebe is a symbol of brightness and virginity (Phoebe, as we know, is the chaste goddess of moon and virginity).

Spenser compares the awe inspired by his beloved’s true beauty to the awe inspired by “Medusaes mazeful hed,” a mythological woman who turned everyone who dared to gaze at her hairs into a rock. This is a symbol to represent the beauty and powerful virtues of his beloved. Spenser considers the spiritual beauty of his lover to be more precious than her outer, physical beauty.

BUT if ye saw that which no eyes can see,
The inward beauty of her liuely spright,
Garnisht with heauenly guifts of high degree,
Much more then would ye wonder at that sight,
And stand astonisht lyke to those which red
Medusaes mazeful hed.
There dwels sweet loue and constant chastity,
Vnspotted fayth and comely womanhood,
Regard of honour and mild modesty,

“Triumph of our victory” from the stanza 14 alludes to the end of the marraige ceremony, which leads in to the wedding merriment, “Make feast therefore now all this liue long day,” and then to day’s end preceding the restful, blissful bridal night.

Now al is done; bring home the bride againe,
bring home the triumph of our victory,

Bring home with you the glory of her gaine,
With ioyance bring her and with iollity.
Neuer had man more ioyfull day then this,
Whom heauen would heape with blis.

The 19th stanza gives a mention to “Frogs” and “Owls”. Spenser is invoking a veil of silence for his bride’s wedding night, a restful silence of bliss in which not even the woods answer back a distratcting sound.

Let none of these theyr drery accents sing;
Ne let the woods them answer, nor theyr eccho ring.

The Canonization JOHN DONNE

For God’s sake hold your tongue, and let me love,

Or chide my palsy, or my gout,
My five gray hairs, or ruined fortune flout,
With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve,
Take you a course, get you a place,
Observe his honor, or his grace,
Or the king’s real, or his stampèd face
Contemplate; what you will, approve,
So you will let me love.

Alas, alas, who’s injured by my love?

What merchant’s ships have my sighs drowned?
Who says my tears have overflowed his ground?
When did my colds a forward spring remove?
When did the heats which my veins fill
Add one more to the plaguy bill?
Soldiers find wars, and lawyers find out still
Litigious men, which quarrels move,
Though she and I do love.

Call us what you will, we are made such by love;

Call her one, me another fly,
We're tapers too, and at our own cost die,
And we in us find the eagle and the dove.
The phoenix riddle hath more wit
By us; we two being one, are it.
So, to one neutral thing both sexes fit.
We die and rise the same, and prove
Mysterious by this love.

We can die by it, if not live by love,
And if unfit for tombs and hearse
Our legend be, it will be fit for verse;
And if no piece of chronicle we prove,
We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;
As well a well-wrought urn becomes
The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,
And by these hymns, all shall approve
Us canonized for Love.

And thus invoke us: "You, whom reverend love
Made one another's hermitage;
You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage;
Who did the whole world's soul contract, and drove
Into the glasses of your eyes
(So made such mirrors, and such spies,
That they did all to you epitomize)
Countries, towns, courts: beg from above
A pattern of your love!"

Introduction

"The Canonization" argues for the superiority of love's unifying and reconciling potential over the divisive and antagonistic impulses of

the ordinary world. In pursuing personal ambitions in business or at court, people like the imagined outsider and courtiers, soldiers, and lawyers trade serenity for strife. The speaker argues that an ideal love, which is both physical and spiritual, can provide a paradigm for the confused world, and he asserts that this poem proves his point.

The reference to the king in the first stanza causes some scholars to associate the poem with the accession of James I in 1604. Only three years earlier, Donne had put a disastrous halt to his own courtly ambitions when he eloped with Ann More, the ward of his employer, Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Seal. Ann More's father had Donne blackballed, in effect, and the couple experienced severe financial strain for several years. This poem might be seen, then, as an explanation or even a justification of his apparently impulsive behaviour.

If his intended audience for the poem was King James himself, Donne's appeal must have fallen on deaf ears, since another ten years were to pass before his fortunes improved. The marriage was apparently a happy one, however, and Ann Donne was to bear nine children before her death in 1617. John Donne did not remarry.

Summary

The speaker asks his addressee to be quiet, and let him love. If the addressee cannot hold his tongue, the speaker tells him to criticize him for other shortcomings (other than his tendency to love): his palsy, his gout, his "five grey hairs," or his ruined fortune. He admonishes the addressee to look to his own mind and his own wealth and to think of his position and copy the other nobles ("Observe his Honour, or his Grace, / Or the King's real, or his stamped face / Contemplate.") The speaker does not care what the addressee says or does, as long as he lets him love.

The speaker asks rhetorically, "Who's injured by my love?" He says that his sighs have not drowned ships, his tears have not flooded land, his colds have not chilled spring, and the heat of his veins has not added to the list of those killed by the plague. Soldiers still find wars and

lawyers still find litigious men, regardless of the emotions of the speaker and his lover.

The speaker tells his addressee to “Call us what you will,” for it is love that makes them so. He says that the addressee can “Call her one, me another fly,” and that they are also like candles (“tapers”), which burn by feeding upon their own selves (“and at our own cost die”). In each other, the lovers find the eagle and the dove, and together (“we two being one”) they illuminate the riddle of the phoenix, for they “die and rise the same,” just as the phoenix does—though unlike the phoenix, it is love that slays and resurrects them.

He says that they can die by love if they are not able to live by it, and if their legend is not fit “for tombs and hearse,” it will be fit for poetry, and “We’ll build in sonnets pretty rooms.” A well-wrought urn does as much justice to a dead man’s ashes as does a gigantic tomb; and by the same token, the poems about the speaker and his lover will cause them to be “canonized,” admitted to the sainthood of love. All those who hear their story will invoke the lovers, saying that countries, towns, and courts “beg from above / A pattern of your love!”

“The Canonization” is one of Donne’s most famous and most written-about poems. Its criticism at the hands of Cleanth Brooks and others has made it a central topic in the argument between formalist critics and historicist critics; the former argue that the poem is what it seems to be, an anti-political love poem, while the latter argue, based on events in Donne’s life at the time of the poem’s composition, that it is actually a kind of coded, ironic rumination on the “ruined fortune” and dashed political hopes of the first stanza. The choice of which argument to follow is largely a matter of personal temperament. But unless one seeks a purely biographical understanding of Donne, it is probably best to understand the poem as the sort of droll, passionate speech-act it is, a highly sophisticated defence of love against the corrupting values of politics and privilege.

Give a critical appreciation of the poem “The Canonization” by John Donne.

“The Canonization” is perhaps technically somewhat atypical of Donne because it isn’t based on a strikingly clever, extended conceit that dominates the poem as a whole, as is so often the case with him. Instead, Donne confronts us with a series of brief, more incidental metaphors in a kind of scattershot approach. Donne and his mistress are, in rapid succession, two flies, two tapers, the eagle and the dove, and the Phoenix. Of their love he says

We can die by it, if not live for love.

The Italian Renaissance poets often used *morire* (to die) as symbolic of sexual climax, and as with many other things, the English transferred that metaphor to our language.

And if no piece of chronicle we prove,
We’ll build in sonnets pretty rooms.

Stanza is Italian for “room.” The rapid-fire metaphorical devices continue, in which a “well-wrought urn” is likened to “these hymns” (the poems Donne and his love will “build”), and finally Donne employs a figure he uses elsewhere in which eyes serve as a reflecting mirror of the outside world, creating a personal microcosm:

You, to whom love was peace, and now is rage;
Who did the whole world’s soul contract, and drove
Into the glasses of your eyes
(So made such mirrors, and such spies
That they did all to you epitomize)
Countries, towns, courts.

As always Donne regards his personal love as so important that the world seems to be subordinated to it. He comes across as something of a narcissist, here and elsewhere in his oeuvre.

Regardless of the technique in which he presents his thoughts, one has to observe about the content of the poem that Donne at least borders on “protesting too much.” He often takes a defensive, angry attitude about

love and sexual matters, reacting harshly to people's alleged criticism of him. Or, possibly he is even parodying this stance as the typical way men act:

For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,
Or chide my palsy, or my gout.

This is similar to his more playful criticism, elsewhere, of the great and central inanimate force he senses as hostile to his desires in interrupting them:

Busy old fool, unruly sun,
Why dost thou thus?

Through windows, and through curtains call on us.

Or the implied criticism is sometimes directed against the object of his love, showing an impatience with her supposed inability to understand his logic:

Mark but this flea, and mark but well in this,
How little that which thou deniest me is.

Donne often comes across as a slightly (or more than slightly) impudent man who seems to overstate the case of how great his love is while simultaneously appearing sarcastic and even hostile. In "The Canonization," the same tendency is there but perhaps not as forcefully as in other poems.

Though we can partly dismiss his attitude as just a sign of the times, it's significant that most of his contemporaries wrote quite differently. The Cavalier poets such as Lovelace recreated a more courtly attitude to women, and other Metaphysicals such as Marvell may have been just as love- (or sex-) obsessed as Donne but in a far more light-hearted manner, without the acerbic, defensive tone. But one thing we can say about "The Canonization" and Donne in general is that whatever his faults, he's honest, and his language is always strikingly effective and uncannily lucid.

What is the paradox inherent in the title of the poem "The Canonization"?

A paradox is a statement that contradicts the central message of a work of literature such as poems, dramas, novels, and short stories.

In "The Canonization" a courtier is venting his frustrations over how he admires someone whom he cannot have. This could be a married woman, a higher ranking woman, or any other woman whose attachment to the courtier would be inappropriate. The man voices aloud his need for this person's love.

When did the heats which my veins fill

Add one more to the plague bill?

Soldiers find wars, and lawyers find out still

Litigious men, which quarrels move,

Though she and I do love.

Since the love is perhaps even sinful, the irony that manifests in the poem's paradoxical title is that the poet treats this indiscreet relationship as if it were a mandate from heaven that the two should be together. He sees himself as a figure of martyrdom and she as someone equally celestial

Call's what you will, we are made such by love ;

Call her one, me another fly,

We're tapers too, and at our own cost die

A canonization is the induction of a martyr into sainthood. As the poem indicates, this is clearly not the case.

How does the poem "The Canonization" illustrate the idea that metaphysical poetry is characterized as much by logical precision as by a union of thought and feeling?

"The Canonization," by John Donne, is an argument. In this argument the speaker presents a logical and persuasive defence of his love. He speaks to a listener who has criticized the speaker's current state of being in love by mentioning the speaker's financial status ("ruined

fortune”) or his age (his “five grey hairs”). The speaker responds with defiance--haven’t you better things to do than to criticize my love? In other words, mind your own business. What follows, however, is a tight argument of which any defence lawyer would be proud. The speaker declares that his love is not hurting anyone else or changed the world in any way--soldiers still fight; lawyers still litigate. The listener objects with the fact that the speaker is hurting himself. The speaker’s rebuttal is brilliant. He offers an analogy and a definition of love. Yes, the speaker claims, my lover and I do destroy ourselves through our love, just as a candle destroys itself to produce light. However, he goes on to compare the lovers to a phoenix that rises from the ashes: “We die and rise the same.” This is the mystery and miracle of love: two people lose their separateness and become one. In this way the speaker shoots down the listener’s objections, and further drives his point home by declaring that instead of criticizing his love, the listener and the rest of the world will want to emulate it and praise it. The speaker refutes each of the listener’s objections and provides a powerful defence of his wondrous, miraculous love--worthy of canonization, not condemnation.

Metaphysical Poetry: Definition, Characteristics and John Donne as a Metaphysical Poet

What is Metaphysical Poetry?

The term metaphysical or metaphysics in poetry is the fruit of renaissance tree, becoming over ripe and approaching pure science. “Meta” means “beyond” and “physics” means “physical nature”. Metaphysical poetry means poetry that goes beyond the physical world of the senses and explores the spiritual world. Metaphysical poetry began early in the Jacobean age in the last stage of the age of Shakespeare.

John Donne was the leader and founder of the metaphysical school of poetry. Dryden used this word at first and said that Donne “affects the metaphysics”. Among other metaphysical poets are Abraham Cowley,

Henry Vaughan, Richard Crashaw, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, Robert Herrick etc.

Characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry

(1) Dramatic manner and direct tone of speech is one of the main characteristics of metaphysical poetry. In the starting line of the poem “The Canonization” – there is given a dramatic starting –

“For God’s sake hold your tongue, and let me love”.

(2) Concentration is an important quality of metaphysical poetry in general and Donne’s poetry is particular. In his all poems, the reader is held to one idea or line of argument. Donne’s poems are brief and closely woven. In “The Extasie”, the principal argument is that the function of man as a man is being worthily performed through different acts of love. He continues with the theme without digression. For instance,

“As ‘twixt two equal armies, Fate
Suspends uncertain victorie,
Our souls, (which to advance their state,
Were gone out,) hung ‘twixt her and me”.

(3) An expanded epigram would be a fitting description of a metaphysical poem. Nothing is described in detail nor is any word wasted. There is a wiry strength in the style. Though the verse forms are usually simple, they are always suitable in enforcing the sense of the poem. For instance –

“Moving of th’earth brings harms and fears
Men reckon what it did and meant,
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent”.

(4) Fondness for conceits is a major character of metaphysical poetry. Donne often uses fantastic comparisons. The most striking and famous one used by Donne is the comparison of a man who travels and his beloved who stays at home to a pair of compasses in the poem “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” –

“If they be two, they are two so

As stiff twin compasses are two,
Thy soul fixt foot makes no show
To move, but doth, if th'other do".

We find another conceit in the very beginning couple of lines of
"The Extasie" –

"Where like a pillow on a bed,
A pregnant bank swel'd up, ...".

(5) Wit is another characteristic of metaphysical poetry. So, here we find various allusions and images relating to practicality all areas of nature and art and learning-- to medicine, cosmology, contemporary discoveries, ancient myth, history, law and art. For instance, in "The Extasie", Donne uses the belief of the blood containing certain spirits which acts as intermediary between soul and body –

"As our blood labours to get
Spirits, as like souls, as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtle knot, which makes us man:"

In the same poem, the Ptolemaic system of astrology is also used when he says –

"... We are
The intelligences, they the sphere".

(6) Metaphysical Poetry is a blend of passion and thought. T. S. Elliot thinks that "passionate thinking" is the chief mark of metaphysical poetry. There is an intellectual analysis of emotion in Donne's Poetry. Though every lyric arises out of some emotional situation, the emotion is not merely expressed, rather it is analyzed. Donne's poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" proves that lovers need not mourn at parting. For instance,

"So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love".

(7) Metaphysical Poetry is a fusion of passionate feelings and logical arguments. For example, in "The Canonization", there is passion expressed through beautiful metaphors:

"Call us what you will, we are made such by love;
Call her one, me another fly,
We are tapers too, and at our own cost die,
And we in us, find the eagle and the dove".

But at the same time, the tone of the poem is intellectual and there is plenty of complexity involved in the conceits and allusions, such as the "Phoenix riddle".

(8) Metaphysical Poetry is the mixture of sensual and spiritual experience. This characteristic especially appears in Donne's poetry. Poems such as "The Canonization", "The Extasie" – even though they are not explicitly discussed, the great metaphysical question is the relation between the spirit and the senses. Often Donne speaks of the soul and of spiritual love. "The Extasie" speaks of the souls of the lovers which come out of their bodies negotiate with one another. For instance,

"And whilst our souls negotiate there,
We like sepulchral statues lay;
All day, the same our postures were,
And we said nothing, all the day".

(9) Usage of satire and irony is another characteristic of metaphysical poetry. Donne also uses this in his poems. For example, in "The Canonization", there is subtle irony as he speaks of the favoured pursuits of people – the lust for wealth and favours.

"Take you a course, get you a place,
Observe his honour, or his Grace".

(10) As far as Donne is concerned, the use of colloquial speech marks the metaphysical poetry. This is especially apparent in the abrupt, dramatic and conversational opening of many of his poems. For instance,
"For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love"
Or,

“Or the King’s real, or his stamped face”

(The Canonization)

(11) Carelessness in diction is another characteristic of metaphysical poetry. These poems reacted against the cloying sweetness and harmony of the Elizabethan Poetry. They deliberately avoided conventional poetic expression. They employed very prosaic words, if they were scientists or shopkeepers. Thus, we find, in their poetic works, rugged and unpoetic words. Their versification and their dictions are usually coarse and jerky.

(12) Affectation and hyperbolic expression is another character of metaphysical poetry. It is often hard to find natural grace in metaphysical writing, abounding in artificiality of thought and hyperbolic expression. The writer deemed to say “something unexpected and surprising. What they wanted to sublime, they endeavored to supply by hyperbole; their amplification had no limit, they left not only reason but fancy behind them and produced combination of confused magnificence”. For instance, the lines of “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” –

“Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to avery thinness beat”.

(13) The lyrics of the metaphysical poems are very fantastic and peculiar. According to A. C. Word, “The metaphysical style is a combination of two elements, the fantastic form and style and the incongruous in matter and manner”.

Therefore, so far we discussed the salient features of metaphysical poetry, it is proved that John Donne is a great metaphysical poet.