

7th Lecture

Byron- **WHEN WE TWO PARTED**

When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that our foretold
Sorrow to this.
The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my brow -
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.
They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o'er me -
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
Who know thee too well: -
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.
In secret we met -
In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee! -
With silence and tears.

INTRODUCTION

This poem is about the love, first, and later the hatred a man feels towards who was his beloved because she left him. It's a very typical Romantic poem, typical of a Romantic writer like Lord Byron, who expresses his feelings of love, a typical issue of Romanticism.

The vocabulary is easy to understand for everybody who studies the English language. The first verse of the poem is also the title of the poem, which means that the writer could not or did not want to find a title for the poem (maybe the damage he felt was so strong that he was not able to find a good title for the poem, as he writes at the end of the third stanza (*Long, long shall I rue thee/ Too deeply to tell*)).

"When We Two Parted" is a poem of George Gordon Byron written in 1808 and published in 1813 in *"The poetical works of Lord Byron"*.

The main characteristic of Byron's poems is its strenght and masculinity, combined in a lot of cases with irony. In *"When We Two Parted"* is a poem of heart broken, expressing strong feelings in a simple but full of meaning vocabulary, such as in other poems like *"So we'll no go more a roving"*.(2)

STRUCTURE

The poem is divided in four stanzas and each one in eight verses. The rhyme used by Byron follows this structure: abab cdcd efef ghgh ijij klkl mnmn kbkb. Separating each stanza in four verses, we have the rhyme more clear, each even verse and each odd verse rhyme with its equivalent even or odd verse. This structure gives to the poem a lot of rhythms, giving the sensation of musicality.

COMMENTARY

On the whole, the poem is all the time giving the feeling of the pain that the poet has due to the separation of the two lovers; what we cannot know is if the separation is because of death or maybe because "she" split up with him.

In **the first stanza** the poet begins with the main topic, remembering the separation of the two lovers, how they felt: "*half broken-hearted*", showing his pain. Also he expresses the idea of what we think that this separation is due to the death of his lover with the metaphor of: "*Pale grew thy cheek and cold, / colder thy kiss*". All that surrounds her is cold, and this cold is a perfect form to express the death in contrast with the warm involving the life.

In a four stanza poem, Byron describes his parting from his beloved. **The first stanza** conveys a sense of sorrow and desolation. Words like tears, broken – hearted, pale, colder and sorrow are used to convey the sadness of the two lovers.

Following with the poem, in **the second stanza** it can be found the relation of colder morning with the pain that the poet is feeling. Also another time we can see that his lover is dead: "*thy vows are all broken*". In the **second stanza**, the poet holds his beloved is responsible for the parting. She has broken her vows.

Nature shares his sadness (the dew of the morning sunk chill on my brow) . This parting took place sometime ago, but he still feels the sadness of it. This corresponds with the romantic belief that the impressions of an experience remain with the poet even after the experience itself has come to an end.

The third stanza contains strong vocabulary showing again that "she" is dead: "*A knell to mine ear; A shudder comes o'er me*". These two verses remain to the sounds of the bells of a funeral, using the appropriated word "Knell". Also he asked himself why he loved her so, and people who knew her well do not know any relation between them.

At the last stanza the poet is remembering when they met and transmits us a feeling of hope: "*If I should meet thee*". Maybe life exists before death and they can reopen their love, and the poet also tells us how they greet: "*With silence and tears*".

The sadness continues throughout **stanza three and four**. Her name is a knell to his ear. His sadness is too deep to describe . She has deceived him and her "heart could forget". He will forgive her. If he meets her after long years, there is nothing to greet her with but silence and tears.

The poet is too sentiment here.

The repetition of "silence and tears" at the beginning and end of the poem denotes the poet's inability to leave his moment of pain behind. He is trapped in a state of grieving a lost love. It is all the more hurtful that he lost her to another man, and all he can offer her is that he will protect her identity by grieving alone.

The cold is a very important metaphorical element at the beginning of the second and the third stanzas: *The dew of the morning/ Sunk chill on my brow*: here the cold is shown as a metaphor of the feelings that the man has towards the woman, as it happens too in *A knell to mine ear/ A shudder comes o'er me*: dew, chill, knell and shudder are words that symbolize cold in many different ways.

In **the last stanza**, the two first verses have two words that may be synonyms, but they mean a totally different thing, they are the contrast of the poem: *In secret we met*, here Byron wants to transmit the passion of two lovers in their first secret encounter. And *In silence I grieve*

symbolizes that nobody can help this man to come back to smile after having been left by the woman he loved. The two following verses, *That thy heart could forget/ Thy spirit deceive* say what she made him: she forgot him and she deceived him.

The Romantic characteristics in the poem

There is a sense of sadness and loneliness permeating the whole poem.

The link between man and nature is evident in the second stanza.

The experience continues with the romantic poet long after the causation has ceased.

Rich imagination and ordinary language .

The question in the poem reflects the poet's wonder and sadness over such a parting.

Model Question

1-The repetition of "silence and tears" in **WHEN WE TWO PARTED** at the beginning and end of the poem denotes the poet's

- 1- happiness
- 2- cheerfulness
- 3- gladness
- 4- painfulness

2-In **WHEN WE TWO PARTED** shares sadness with the poet .

- A- the wife
- B- the neighbor
- C- nature
- D- a friend

The correct answer is (c)