

Principles of Literary Study
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Office hours: Thursdays 11:45–12:45 in MU 040A or by appt.

March 9, 2025. Shahid (3).

paper

- ▶ deadline extended to Friday the 13th at 10 p.m.
- ▶ ...so you have to make your paper good

extra credit opportunity

- ▶ Attend Writers at Rutgers with Mat Johnson (student Q&A, 4 p.m., Murray Hall, Room 302; reading, 7:30 p.m., College Avenue Student Center). Write a 100-word note about it to share with the class for extra credit.

review: what about...

- ▶ metaphors and other figures of speech?
- ▶ lineation and enjambment?
- ▶ sound patterns and rhyme?
- ▶ the appearance on the page?
- ▶ grammar patterns?
- ▶ meter and rhythm (or lack thereof)?
- ▶ stanza shape or other structures?
- ▶ genre: expectations and surprises?
- ▶ speakers, addressees? apostrophe?
- ▶ the speaking situation or implicit “plot”?
- ▶ ...form?

review: beyond English?

Go all the way through *jungle* from *aleph* to *zenith*
to see English, like monkeys, swung beyond English.

- ▶ “*jung*” and “*young*” rhyme (*macaronic*)
- ▶ “*jungle*”: from Hindi *jaṅgal* from Sanskrit *jaṅgala*
 - ▶ whereas Hindi-Urdu *jaṅg* is borrowed from Persian
- ▶ “*aleph*”: the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet
 - ▶ English “alphabet” related to *aleph-beth* (and *ʿalif-bā*)
 - ▶ because the Greeks borrowed the alphabet from the Phoenicians, who spoke a Semitic language
- ▶ “*zenith*”: ultimately from Arabic (because a lot of astronomy was developed by Muslims in the Middle Ages)
- ▶ postcolonial? how about *trans*-colonial?
 - ▶ because Kashmir is still a colony, more or less
 - ▶ because Shahid writes from elsewhere
 - ▶ because English is not itself and never was (“no language is old—or young”)

reasons for difficulty

- ▶ Why are Shahid's ghazals so hard to understand?

reasons for difficulty

- ▶ Why are Shahid's ghazals so hard to understand?
- ▶ the ghazal is a tough form, so the language gets twisted
- ▶ "Shahid is waging a war (no, *jung*) beyond English."
- ▶ English cannot say everything that must be said
- ▶ Shahid writes of things that cannot be said directly
- ▶ life is hard to understand
- ▶ but also: puzzles are fun
- ▶ poetic meaning can be by suggestion rather than statement

you choose

the shape of the volume: symmetries

- ▶ “I must go back... / to tell you” (23)
- ▶ “Arabic” (24–25)
- ▶ “Of Water” (46–47)
- ▶ “Air” (59): one-couplet hinge
- ▶ “Water” (55–56)
- ▶ “In Arabic” (80)
- ▶ “Tell me what I was like” (84)

shape: a narrative arc?

- ▶ begin by returning
 - ▶ “I must go back” (23)
- ▶ exile
 - ▶ “you learn your strange fate” (28)
 - ▶ “Read slowly: the plot will unfold in real time” (33)
 - ▶ “I have brought my life here” (34)
 - ▶ “If home is found on both sides of the globe” (50)
- ▶ facing death
 - ▶ “I am become flesh” (61)
 - ▶ “If someone asks where Shahid has disappeared” (69)
 - ▶ “And I, Shahid, only am escaped to tell thee—” (83)

shape: clusters

- ▶ elementals: “Of Fire,” “Of Water,” “Land,” “Water,” “Air”
- ▶ supernaturals: “Angels,” “God”
- ▶ eternities: “As Ever,” “Forever”
- ▶ tick-tock: “From the Start,” “For Time,” “Tonight”

“Tonight”: speakers again

- ▶ Listen to Shahid reading in 1997: [Ball State U./YouTube](#)
 - ▶ Who is being addressed?
 - ▶ What are the addressees being asked / commanded / prayed to do?

reversals / heresies / travesties

- ▶ “haven: Prisons”
- ▶ “He’s left open—for God—the doors of Hell tonight”
- ▶ “I’ll bless Jezebel”
- ▶ “multiply me”

deixis for now

deictic (“pointing out”) a word whose referent depends on the speaking situation

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deictic (“pointing out”) a word whose referent depends on the speaking situation

- ▶ I, you, now...tonight

escape

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world.

Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (New York: Harper, 1851), 1, [Melville Electronic Library](#).

“AND I ONLY AM ESCAPED ALONE TO TELL THEE.”

Job.

The drama's done. Why then here does any one step forth? —Because one did survive the wreck.

Ibid., 313. “Job” is another Old Testament reference.

next: midterm: let's review

- ▶ short answer, some choice
- ▶ accommodations: ask me *now*, not later
- ▶ key poetics terms/concepts *mainly via examples*
- ▶ metrics: nothing too punishing
- ▶ poem identification: only texts mentioned in class
- ▶ critical essays (Robson, Vendler, Warner): the basic ideas

practice 1

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments; love is not love
Which alters where it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove

- ▶ Identify the author and the type of poem. Using the language quoted, briefly discuss how the poem suggests its own occasion or back story.

practice 2

Comment in at least three specific ways on Heaney's use of the sonnet in "Clearances" 3:

When all the others were away at Mass
I was all hers as we peeled potatoes.
They broke the silence, let fall one by one
Like solder weeping off the soldering iron:
Cold comforts set between us, things to share
Gleaming in a bucket of clean water.
And again let fall. Little pleasant splashes
From each other's work would bring us to our senses.

So while the parish priest at her bedside
Went hammer and tongs at the prayers for the dying
And some were responding and some crying
I remembered her head bent towards my head,
Her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives—
Never closer the whole rest of our lives.

practice 3

In these lines from Swift, mark stressed and unstressed syllables, beats, and offbeats:

Ah! where must needy Poet seek for Aid,
When Dust and Rain at once his Coat invade?

Identify the meter.

next

- ▶ midterm on Thursday in class
- ▶ paper due: extended to Friday