She Walks in Beauty: A Woman's Journey Through Poems Study Guide

She Walks in Beauty: A Woman's Journey Through Poems by Caroline Kennedy

BOOKRAGS

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Falling in Love

Falling in Love Summary

As a collection of poetry by different writers, the book is organized into sections according to theme instead of chapters. Each section is introduced with a prose narrative by the editor, Caroline Kennedy, who sets the tone for the reader and explains why the individual poems have been selected. Kennedy introduces this section with the observation, "Falling in love is a series of moments in which the ordinary becomes extraordinary."

"A Very Valentine" by Gertrude Stein is a brief series of sentences linked by repetitive rhymes of mine, fine, and Valentine. Vintage Stein, the poem seems to capture the giddy sense of lightness that accompanies love. In "Song," the English poet John Keats appeals to his love to stop putting on airs and "cut the sweet apple" of love so they can both taste it. This verse is a far cry from some of Keats' better-known poems such as "Ode to Melancholy."

Caroline Norton's "I Do Not Love Thee" is a sardonic, confessional poem in which the refrain denying her love is juxtaposed with descriptions of how much she longs for her beloved when he's not around, and despite the fact that people on the street smile at her because of her fixation on him. Christopher Marlowe, a contemporary of Shakespeare, declares in his play "Hero and Leander" that true love springs forth at first sight—not through hesitation or struggle. Romantic poet Percy Shelley soars lyrically in his praise of nature in "Love's Philosophy" but asks what value any of these treasures are if his beloved will not kiss him.

In "Having a Coke with You," Frank O'Hara's hip, contemporary style conveys the message to his beloved that, despite the attractions of museums, sculpture and New York City, there is nothing he loves more than simply being with her. Dorothy Parker, in "Symptom Recital," lists a litany of discomforts ("I hate to go to bed at night") and says she "shudders" at the mere thought of men. These are all clear signs, the poet says, that she is "due to fall in love again." Sappho, the legendary ancient Greek lesbian, entreats Queen Aphrodite—who may be the generalized female spirit—to come to her holy temple and "pour nectar into gold cups" and fill them with joy in"To Aphrodite of the Flowers, at Knossos." Although couched in naturalistic imagery and sentiment, the poem is nothing more than a direct appeal to women to join the lesbian dance. In "Come to the Orchard in Spring," 13th Century Persian philosopher andpoet Rumi expresses a somewhat ambivalent attitude toward love. He asks his beloved to join him in the orchard filled with "light and wine, and sweethearts in the pomegranate flowers." Then he observes that these signs of spring really don't matter whether or not she comes to the orchard.

Sandra Cisneros compares her heart to a clown doing backflips, the "sweet potato plant of my addictions," and to a diver leaping off the high cliffs of Acapulco into the foamy surf as she tries to describe the feeling of falling in love in "Little Clown, My Heart."

Falling in Love Analysis

The poems in this section emphasize the headiness, the euphoria, and sense of abandon that accompany falling in love. In the case of Caroline Norton, falling in love is accompanied by a strong sense of ambivalence, as she tries to deny to herself that she really does not love her beloved. Love as a delirious disease whose symptoms include restlessness, sleeplessness, emotional highs and lows signal to poet Dorothy Parker that she is, indeed, about to fall in love again Sandra Cisneros compares falling in love with doing backflips or diving off a high cliff into the restless surf hundreds of feet below. The expression "to fall in love" seems apt, since these emotions feel transcendent and empowering, if a little scary. We are swept off our feet by a force we can not understand and can not control, set adrift in a realm of pleasant sensations. Like a tipsy party goer, if we aren't careful we will "fall" and become dreamy, obsessive, and perhaps delusional - like someone with a fever.

Making Love

Making Love Summary

Wendy Cope uses a repeating phrase at the end of five of the poem's stanzas: "I think of little else but you." From this repetition the reader gets a sense of the obsessive nature of her love. In "Wild Nights—Wild Nights!" Emily Dickinson likens herself to a boat tossed furiously about in a storm and asks to seek refuge in her lover. E.E. Cummings captures the frantic furtiveness of an illicit affair in "may i feel said he." By degrees, he asks her if he can take further liberties and she consents although worried about his wife. Steve Kowit, writing in the style of Vikatanitamba, describes in "When He Pressed His Lips" being swept way by a passion so overwhelming that details of the encounter and with whom are fuzzy in the memory.

Robert Herrick's "Corinna's Going a-Maying" is an urgent plea for his sweetheart to join him in experiencing the delights of May. It is quite reminiscent of Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," in which the poet yearns for the company of his mistress. Herrirck's poem compares the brief life of the couple to the buds and blossoms of spring that create spectacular beauty, then fade and die. Thus, the urgency of consummating their romance. Life also comes and goes in a flash, he says, so the lovers must outrun their fate: "Then, while time serves, [and] we are but decaying." Amy Lowell explores three levels of meaning in "The Weather-Cock Points South." The poem focuses on an image of a white flower in the moonlight and is ostensibly addressed to the flower. But the flower may also be a metaphor for the beloved, which the poet sees in full only in moonlight. There is also an elegiac quality to the poem, a strong suggestion that the beloved may be dead and that communion can only take place in moonlit solitude.

John Donne, the 17th Century English poet, describes in fine detail his rising lust and impatience in "To His Mistress Going to Bed." He watches her preparations and rituals, then finally asks: "What needest thou have more covering than a man?" Even the biblical Song of Solomon is rife with the same allusions to spring and love-making of later poets. Although Song of Solomon was almost certainly written by a man, it is recited by an anonymous person who identifies herself as "the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys." The poem describes a carnal, rather than spiritual, love and declares that her lover feeds upon the lilies (herself) "until the break of day."

Wallace Stevens exults in the special world he and his lover have created, in "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour," where they feel secure and contented. Their world is created from the light of the imagination, which some call God, and "we make a dwelling in the evening air, in which being there together is enough." Margaret Atwood, in "Variation on the Word Sleep," confesses her desire to sleep next to and to enter the sleep of her lover. The poet says she would like to be "unnoticed and necessary" as the air that her lover breathes while asleep. An Irish couple's delight at having their baby son join them in bed, after their lovemaking, is sweetly described by Galway Kinnell in "After Making Love We Hear Footstep." Elizabeth Bishop imagines awakening with her

lover to the sound of raindrops, then a lightning strike that would be carried directly into the ground by "the four four blue china balls on the top." In "It Is Marvelous..." she observes that the world changes as suddenly as lighting strikes just "as our kisses are changing without our thinking.

Linkage between the sense of smell and a lover make "White Heliotrope" by Arthur Symons alive and immediate. The poet describes their bedroom, with clothes flung about, and the two lovers eyeballing each other carefully upon awakening. The incident will be forever lodged in his memory, Symons says, to be recalled like a "ghost of memory" whenever he scents his handkerchief with White Heliotrope. In "Youth," Osip Mandelstam tells his beloved that all through his youth he sought her without really knowing what he searched for. When he found her, he began to fear losing her and she became "part memory part distance remaining" just before she left completely.

Making Love Analysis

As the common euphemism for intercourse, "making love" also conveys secondary meanings of romance, seduction, and overruling passion. The poems in this section are chosen to cover the full spectrum of those shades of meaning. Both Robert Herrick and John emphasize the high spirits of physical seduction and love making in their poems. These poems convey a sense of urgency about the need to procreate while the strong lusts of youth surge. in that regard, these two poems seem to echo some pre-Christian love songs and poems composed by ancient Greeks who recognized several dieties of desire including Eros and Aphrodite. Their frank call for lovemaking may have been considered a bit risqué in their time.

Breaking Up

Breaking Up Summary

Katherine Garrison Chapin reveals a darker, harsher side to love in "Lilacs," when she describes receiving pretty lilacs from her lover but is unable to tell him that, "It is the lilacs I love, not you." 1950s wit Dorothy Parker warns young women that if they are quaking and shaking, and if their partner vows eternal love, they must make a note because "one of you is lying." In "The Philosopher," Edna St. Vincent Millay asks herself why she should cry and lose sleep over her man, when she knows many kinder men and wonders why he is the one man on her mind. She then asks herself why she thinks she should "love so wisely and so well."

Roger McGough captures the mutability and tenuousness of romantic love in "Summer with Monika," in which he tells his lover that he is lonely whenever apart from her, but is overwhelmed by an urge to escape whenever he is with her. "I'm Going to Georgia" is a folk song that the reader can "hear" as a blues while reading. It is the story of a woman whose husband turned out to be a drunk; she is fleeing him and going back to Georgia to "a cabin on the mountain so high, where the wild birds and turtledove can hear my sad cry." Ingeborg Bachmann says that when she lost her love and their life together, she lost the entire world in "A Type of Loss." She grieves over things "jointly used" such as seasons, music and books, "the keys, the tea cups, the breadbasket, sheets, and a bed."

Queen Elizabeth I seems to address "On Monsieur's Departure" to a lover she wants to discard, but she can not cut the emotional cords that bind them together. She bemoans the fact she can't show her true emotions and that she can't stop caring for her lover. The poem ends with a plea that she know "some gentler passion" or that her lover become either more cruel or sweet so she can more easily leave him. "The Eaten Heart" from "The Knight of Curtesy" is a grim tale of illicit love, revenge and death. A lord serves his wife a piece of her lover's heart, and does not tell her it is that of her lover knight until she has eaten her fill. Grief-stricken, the lady rushes in tears to her chamber; she promises never to eat meat again and tells her husband she is chaste. Then the lady collapses and dies.

Emily Dickinson describes her intense ambivalence about parting from her beloved in this two-stanza poem. She describes her two partings from him as "so huge, so hopeless to conceive." George Gordon, Lord Byron - usually thought of as a seducer and womanizer -shows his tender nature in "When We Two Parted." Byron evokes the pain of estrangement: "Pale grew thy cheek and cold, colder thy kiss." He asks himself how he should greet her if he sees her years later; his answer is "with silence and tears." Edna St. Vincent Millay, who is capable of soaring flights of passion, faces the end of a relationship matter-of-factly in "Well I Have Lost You." Seemingly free from bitterness, she acknowledges nights of "hot weeping," but is proud that she did not seek to keep the defunct relationship alive through manipulation or ruses.

In Sonnet XLII ("What Lips My Lips Have Kissed, and Where and Why"), Millay strikes a real note of sorrow over her lost and sometimes forgotten loves. Alone, she is haunted by rain that "is full of ghosts" and by spirits of departed lovers who, as raindrops, rap and tap on her window. She likens herself to a lonely tree in winter that is unaware of all the birds that have vanished from its branches but yet aware of the silence. Her summer song that rang out briefly "in me sings no more." When her lover no longer remembers their Sundays in bed, their Sunday suppers and "bright bedclothes," he will have forgotten her well, Gwendolyn Brooks says in "when you have forgotten Sunday: the love story." Elizabeth Alexander recites a melancholy list of all the things she shared with her lover that are now gone ("citrus zester, apple corer, rusting mandoline") but finds a doll from their wedding in "The End." She places it in a tree, in hopes someone will walk by and take it. But it remains in rain, wind and sun. "Then one day, it is gone."

Breaking Up Analysis

Inevitably, it seems, passion is followed by heartbreak. The poems in this section on breaking up relate to romantic love, as opposed to filial or parental love neither of which is immune from estrangement or heartbreak. But breaking up of two people who were once lovers can be especially painful and poignant. "Lilacs" is testament to how even a small amount of deception, of either self or lover, can cause great pain. The poet receives some lilacs from her admirer, for which she is grateful but unable to say: "It is the lilacs I love, not you." Honesty is suggested as the only policy. Ingeborg Bachmann, reflecting on the sorrow of her breakup, realizes through her memories that, "It was not you I lost, but the world." Even the seemingly prim and pristine Emily Dickinson knows the depth of pain when she says, in "My life closed twice before its close," that "Parting is all we know of heaven/And all we need of hell." And the rakish Lord Byron, known as a great lover, is wounded in his breakup as described in "When We Two Parted," as separation "in silence and tears." Trying to take the high road in a breakup, poet Edna St. Vincent Millay promises her lover: "I shall have only good t say of you."

Marriage

Marriage Summary

In introducing this section, Caroline Kennedy notes "the pursuit of love and the strength of a lifetime commitment remain their own rewards and the foundation of much of our social order."

The section opens with a timeless poem by Christopher Marlowe, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." The poem has long been considered a lusty cry for coupling. It is simple and direct and maintains a positive tone throughout. Its rhyming pattern, AA-BB-CC-DD, also is simple and provides a steady beat. The imagery is richly naturalistic, invoking valleys, groves, roses, posies, straw, gold, and more. This naturalistic imagery fits with the speaker as a "passionate shepherd" who offers these earthly delights to his beloved.

Gregory Corso, one of the "Beat Generation" poets, engages in a dialogue with himself in "Marriage." He envisions an awkward time meeting her parents, who will give him the third degree, finally offering their consent. He sees himself and his bride going to Niagara Falls on a honeymoon with hundreds of other eager young couplers. He tries to convince himself this is a good idea: "I should get married, I should be good." As he pictures their domestic life he imagines living in "hot smelly tight New York City seven flights up, roaches and rats in the walls (and) a fat Reichian wife screeching over potatoes Get a job!" The prospect of marriage frightens him and yet he asks: "What if I'm 60 years old and not married, all alone in a furnished room with pee stains on my underwear and everybody else is married!"

"The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia" by Sir Philip Sidney is written in sonnet form; its first line is also the last: "My true love hath my heart, and I have his." The countess says that both were wounded with love for each other, and his heart lives in her while hers lives in him. Contemporary poet e.e. cummings carries on the same theme of interchanged hearts in "i carry your heart with me) i carry it in" and, perhaps mimicking the Sidney sonnet, uses redundant first and last lines: "I carry your heart with me (I carry it in my heart)." This is "the deepest secret" and the "wonder that's keeping the stars apart."Anne Bradstreet, in "To My Dear and Loving Husband," expands on the theme of marital unity and calls upon her husband to join her in loving so intensely that, even after death, they will remain together.

Gavin Stewart employs a string of playful alliterative metaphors to describe and celebrate his wife in "To Margo." For example, he says she's "the crumble on my apple crumble and the fairy on my Christmas tree," and the "lustre of a diamond cluster." Ogden Nash offers his characteristically brief and dry wit in "A Word to Husbands." His simple advice: "Whenever you're wrong, admit it; whenever you're right, shut up." Lady Mary Chudleigh implores women not to become subservient to their husbands or to view them as gods and themselves as a slaves; instead she tells women they must

have value unto themselves, not as an extension of another person. In "The Female of The Species," Rudyard Kipling says a male cobra will slither away at the sound of approaching footstep while the female stays put near the trail. Seven of the poem's 13 stanzas end with the refrain: "The female of the species is more deadly than the male."

Before eating from the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed a blissfully innocent existence, John Milton says in a passage from Paradise Lost. Not long afterwards, the first couple falls into suspicion, discord and blame. Adam tells Eve that he ate of the apple because he was blinded by love for her. Adam says the same fate awaits any man who worships a woman: "Thus it shall befall him who to worth in women overtrusting lets her will rule." Thereafter, Milton says, the couple spent wasted hours engaged in "mutual accusation."

Long before divorce courts began to estimate the worth of a wife's contribution to marriage, it was covered in "The Good Wife" from Proverbs 31:10-31. This is nothing if not a paean to the many virtues of the hard working wife, "for her price is far above rubies." Among other things the good wife has and respects the trust of her husband, will never harm him, works wool and flax "willingly" with her hands, and rises in the night to prepare meals for her family and servants. The good wife purchases prime pieces of land and plants vineyards, reaches out her hand to the poor and needy, makes fine linen and sells it while her clothing is "strength and honor." The good wife "looketh well to the ways of her household and eatetth not the bread of idleness." Victorian poet Robert Browning calls a visitor's attention to a former wife whose image is one of many in his home in "My Last Duchess." The lifelike rendering, he says, only captures a part of her vibrant personality and outgoing nature. Then he calls attention to a statue of Neptune, as if to say his duchess is but one of many collectibles.

An unhappy wife soliloquizes about her husband's personality changes in male menopause in "To Speak of Woe That Is In Marriage" by Robert Lowell. The drinking and fighting that have come to characterize their marriage are only resolved when her husband goes out to cruise for prostitutes, she says. And she dreads his impotent lust as "gored by the climacteric of his want, he stalls above me like an elephant." A widowed woman recalls how, in the arrogance of youth, she and her husband imagined themselves to be immune to the failures that beset all humans. "Like everybody else, we thought of ourselves as special," she admits. Now, almost 20 years since his death, she wonders what "the leap" they dreamed of making would have looked like. She survives alone "not as a leap but a succession of brief, amazing moments."

"Letter from My Wife" by Nazim Hikmet rhapsodizes lyrically about who should die first (the wife), how their ashes should be co-mingled so even their atoms can fuse, and eventually put back into the earth to feed beautiful new flowers. She tells her husband "my blood is hot" and she wants another child before dying, which she doesn't plan to do for a long time. But there is a surprise ending that changes the entire tone of the poem as she asks her husband: "Any chance you'll get out of prison soon?" W.S. Merwin, in "To Paula in Late Spring," expresses a wistfulness and a yearning that the couple could come back from the dead and once again enjoy "the light as it is now in the garden that we have made here these years together." In the Vietnamese folk poem

"A Farmer's Calendar," the poet notes how man and wife work together through all the seasons to derive their livelihood from farming. The poet observes that they are together through feast or famine: "Isn't that better than always prospering, alone?"

Marriage Analysis

Is marriage the natural culmination of desire, a serious commitment to procreation of the race, or merely a choice one makes for a more pleasant life? The answer, it would seem from reading the poems in this section, is all of the above. Gregory Corso debates the issue of marriage with himself and decides that getting married is the good and right thing to do and probably the choice most beneficial to himself. Both Sir Philip Sidney and e.e. cummings equate marriage with carrying the heart of their beloved with themselves, or merging both body and soul. Mary Chudleigh equates marriage with slavery and advises women to avoid both. British poet John Milton, in "Paradise Lost," sees marriage in idealistic terms, just as Adam first saw Eve: "O fairest of creation/Of all God's works, creature in whom excelled/Whatever can to sight or thought be formed." The Bible, in Proverbs 31:10-31, specifies what the role of wife should be, and it is very close to an around-the-clock worker for her family and God. Robert Lowell describes the married state as "woe" and describes the unhappy gropings of a couple well past its physical and sexual prime. In Vietnamese culture, as reflected in a folk poem, wives are equated with farm laborers who not only plant and harvest crops but pay taxes as well. From this selection of poems, there seems to be a bias toward wives carrying more than their fair share of the domestic burden.

Love Itself

Love Itself Summary

Romantic poet Christina Rossetti employs a series of similes to describe the powerful love and joy she feels in "A Birthday." Her heart, she says, is like a singing bird, an apple tree, and a rainbow but even happier because "my love is come to me." To celebrate "the birthday of my life," she would like a dais of silk and down "with vair and purple dyes," carved in birds and pomegranates, worked "in gold and silver grapes." Richard Wilbur revels in the subtleties of summer that recall his beloved in "June Light." He hears her voice calling him to the window, where he sees "all things raise plainly their seeming into seamless air." He recalls when she tossed him a summer pear that became wine before it could rot, and praises her "gay gift" that fell into his hands "through all that naive light." A remorseful lover laments that he can not retract words that left "the protocols of friendship broken" in "Protocols" by Vikram Seth. At dawn, he walks in the lawn of the house where she lies sleeping and hopes the sun will burn away his footprints and hold her "in its warmth and keeping."

A pair of punchy, short poems elucidate love. In "Jamesian," Thom Gunn describes a couple who could only communicate about whether they could communicate. Antonio Machado, in "Proverbs and Song Verse," reminds that a bit of overstatement never harmed the language of love. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Sonnet XLIII ("How Do I Love Thee?") proves once again why it is a classic, favored as part of many wedding ceremonies: "If God choose, I shall but love thee better after death." In a contorted bit of poetic logic, Pablo Neruda's "You must know that I do not love and that I love you" explains the seeming paradox: "I love you in order to begin to love you, to start infinity again and never stop loving you—that's why I do not love you yet." Thus, the poet says, he loves her even when he does not love her as well as when he does.

Leo Marks speaks with the voice of freedom offering life and death for the love of others in "Code Poem for the French Resistance." That love, the poet says, "is yours and yours and yours." Likewise, death will only be a temporary situation so that "the peace of my years in the long green grass' will also be "yours and yours and yours." The poet Amy Clampitt, in "The Smaller Orchid" is surprised and delighted to recognize that love is like the tiny white orchid she discovers thriving in a rocky crevice near the seashore, "a cheerful little, white, down-to-earth orchid declaring its authenticity" unlike the overblown and overgrown flowers of the hothouse. Possibly the best known and best written love poem of all time is Shakespeare's Sonnet 116: "Love is not love which alters when it alterations finds...Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks/But bears it out even to the edge of doom. " The Persian mystic Rumi beckons the reader to meet him in a field "out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing," where the soul can rest in the grass, "where even the phrase each other doesn't make any sense."

Matthew Rohrer makes a thoroughly modern affirmation of love in "The Emperor" as his sweetheart sends him a text message from her train saying she's on her way home. He

sets the dinner table, pours her a glass of wine and gives her supper as the wind and rain pelt the windows. He realizes that "the emperor himself is not this happy." Raymond Carver also counts himself fortunate in love in "Late Fragment," when he asks the reader whether he/she got what they wanted in life; he answers that he wanted to be "beloved on he earth" and did just that. In "The First Morning of The Second World" Delmore Schwartz imagines himself playing with other children in summer heat, innocently enjoying himself. Later, when he becomes an abstract thinker, he gets lost in his own ideas and becomes frustrated with life until he is able to set aside his thoughts and once again experience those things he had cast aside: "sparks or glitters of pleasure, trivial and transient." Finally, he comes to the realization that "to be is to be in love, love is the fullness of being."

Perhaps the most eloquent definition of love is found in the Bible, "Corinthians 13:1-13," that is rich with memorable lines and images. Some of these describe love as patient, kind, free of envy and pride. Love "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." Love is not easily angered and keeps no roster of wrongs, is not self-seeking but "rejoices with the truth," according to the Bible.

Love Itself Analysis

Pablo Neruda's twisted bit of romantic thinking about loving and not living his sweetheart at the same time may be a tongue-in-cheek way of describing the pleasant sense of disorder that arises in the hearts of lovers and is only understood by them alone. This kind of meeting of the souls engages a meeting of the minds; a union of this intensity can be quite disorienting, Neruda suggests. The poet Rumi sees the essence of love as a kind of world unto itself, unreached by the usual rules of normal thought and discourse. In this pure essence of love, the two lovers completely merge into each other creating a new soul body that is greater than either one alone. Delmore Schwatrz says pure love is an opening of one's self to the universe in a transcendent manner unavailable to the individual soul. The Bible sees love as the completion of one's soul just as maturity is the ripening of one's body. Shakespeare sees love as a universal and powerful force that first accepts the other as they are with all their defects and shortcomings and hopes for the same in return and does not seek to change the beloved to conform to one's own wishes. Thus one must accept another just as they are in order to accept their love and to reciprocate, Shakespeare implies.

Work

Work Summary

Ms. Kennedy opens this section with a bit of history about working American women. She contrasts working women in the upper half of the socioeconomic scale with women in the lower half who work; In the case of the latter, these women are often "the primary breadwinners in a majority of households and often struggle to support a family alone." Even for those women with professional careers, pay for women still averages 25 percent lower than the same work performed by men, she asserts. She notes that women poets often support social causes such as child labor laws, at school, at work and at home. Equal opportunity and equal wages for equal work are now the touchstone of American workplace. Although, Kennedy says, it is very difficult to find any contemporary poetry about women at work, no modern-day "Rosie the Riveter."

Gwendolyn Brooks gives the independent women of the world a pat on the back in "Weaponed Woman," a work of just two stanzas. These women use "semi-folded arms," a heavy hand bag and the "stiff frost of her face" to challenge the male-dominated world. "Night Waitress" by Lynda Hull describes the exhaustion of a night shift waitress as she leaves work for home, just as the new day is breaking and sees "the men surge to the factories." As she walks out in the morning her mouth is "bitter with sleeplessness," and she can barely stand up on the street. One of the few bright spots in her mother's life as a washer woman is putting out brightly-colored undergarments to flutter dry in the sun in "In An Iridescent Time," by Ruth Stone. As she and her sisters wash laundry by hand in a tub, they are pestered by buzzing bees. Each has her own "rainbow board" on which they rub their knuckles raw. Always, the brightly colored clothes provide them with a spot of joy.

Resentment of a domestic servant against her employer presents a kind of one-sided love in "Madam and Her Madam" by Langston Hughes. The maid must clean her 12-room mansion, fix meals, care for the children, wash the dishes, and walk the dog. Finally the maid asks her employer if she is trying to make her into a "pack horse." She answers no and says, "Alberta, I love you so!" But Alberta tells her, "That may be true, but I'll be dogged if I love you!" In "Letters from Storyville," a young woman writes to the head of the boarding house where she formerly lived in Mississippi that her fortunes have turned for the better since she met "the countess" who has given her a place to live with all the other prostitutes. The madam has given her the name of Violet, although her real name is Ophelia. She describes how she was auctioned to the highest bidder, and went upstairs with him. "He did not know to call me Ophelia," she writes.

Margaret Walker, in "Lineage," describes how strong her grandmothers were, "full of sturdiness and singing." She then wonders why she is not as strong as they were. The horrors of sweat shop clothing mills in San Antonio, Texas are vividly described in "I Want You Woman Up North to Know" by Tillie Olsen. The poet tells about the desperate lives of Catalina Rodriguez, Maria Vasquez, Catalina Torres, and Ambrosa Espinosa -

all workers in sweat shops that produce fancy clothes for American women and children, "stitching these dresses from dawn to night, in blood, in wasting flesh." Catalina Rodriguez earns $3 a week, Maria Vasquez stitches children's garments for 15 cents per dozen. To the women up north, the poet says: "This can't last forever. I swear it won't." A young woman sips tea in a café as she writes in her notebook, her infant son sleeping beside her. She wants to project a professional image as she looks for work, not revealing the fact she "mash[es] oatmeal and change[s] diapers," in At the Café" by Patricia Kirkpatrick. She wants to appear as she is, "a woman who has chosen a table between her sleeping child and the beginning of everything."

The grim business of a well-educated woman who works until 10 p.m. in the city and who can't get a cab in the cold rain of New York City is the painful burden of "Worked Late on a Tuesday Night" by Deborah Garrison. The poet describes the "career girls - the haggard beauties, the vivid can-dos" as they scurry about in the storm over half-eaten deli sandwiches left in the park. Perhaps mocking herself, she asks: "Never thought you'd be one of them, did you, little lady? Little Miss Phi Beta Kappa, with your closetful of pleated skirts, twenty-nine till death do us part!" She berates herself for being an inadequate wife and mother: "I'm not half of what I meant to be." Alane Rollings expresses the anguish of a woman with a sketchy employment history looking for a job in "The Age of Great Vocations." As the managers size up job candidates, she is anxious an embarrassed about her resume that includes doing strip-o-grams, decorating cakes and selling flowers at traffic lights. She has 13 letters of reference but discovers that "fooling a man is a full-time job." She eats a stale moon pie and brings gloves to the homeless. The poet tells the woman, "Your vocation is to feel less despair about despair."

In "Defining Worlds," G.Y. Baxter expresses her frustration to being a working mother who is guilt-ridden because of the time she can't spend with her child, and the many school events she can't attend. As she runs "between two worlds" the poet is aware that she is "passing years, tears enough to drown me, but I swim." Then comes the "greeting card moment" when her daughter wants to be like her mother; she speculates "who wouldn't choose that?" A slow-burn anger flickers in the hearts of women across American as they burn dinners they are expected to give their husbands "with calico smiles,"in Marge Piercy's "What's That Smell in the Kitchen?" The grumbling resentment of "carbonized despair" makes women wish to barbeque their husbands, or to serve them "a dead rat with a bomb in its belly." An old man says he can do more work in one day than his wife can do in three in the folk song "Father Grumble." So they switch jobs for a day. The old man finds that the cow won't let him milk her, the hen won't lay and he doesn't have time to wind the yarn that his wife reeled the day before. Humbled, Father Grumble admits "his wife could do more work in one day than he could do in seven." An anonymous epitaph from a grave in England marks the last resting place for "a poor old woman who was always tired." It says the woman has gone to a place where there is no cooking, sewing or washing. She tells visitors that she will "do nothing for ever and ever."

Work Analysis

For women, work has provided both the chains that hold them in domestic servitude as well as the income for them to lead a better, more fulfilling life. And this ambivalence is captured within the poems in this section. Housewives all across the country serving their husbands burnt dinners serves as a comic backdrop for Marge Piercy's call for a feminist revolution as women reach for a full professional life in which they are the equal of men. Hungry? Then get yourself something to eat, she suggests, shrugging off the traditional role of wife and mother as strictly a domestic worker. But the choice between career and domesticity isn't always as clear-cut for some women who must simply work to survive, as exemplified in "Night Waitress" by Lynda Hull. This unhappy woman wants what all women want, but is just too tired after a night of work to look for anything better and is stuck in her life. A poetic letter from a young woman who has left the country to work as a prostitute in New Orleans becomes the victim of her own hopes and dreams when she accepts the phoney pretenses of finding liberation in her profession. What she finds, instead, is just another form of exploitation even more discouraging and humiliating than her status in Louisiana rural life. In these poems, the assumption that work liberates women is called into question, when that work becomes self-defeating in a male-dominated society.

"Worked Late on a Tuesday Night" describes the frustration of an educated white career woman in New York who has achieved success at work but whose personal family life is blighted by her demanding schedule, commuting in the rain, and continual rushing about. She fears that she may have made the wrong choices when it dawns on her that she is simply too fatigued to really be an engaged wife or mother.

Beauty, Clothes and Things of This World

Beauty, Clothes and Things of This World Summary

Caroline Kennedy introduces this section with a remembrance of the style and grace of her mother, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, and the observation that she seemed to be a trend-setter as the first lady of President John Kennedy. Her originality, good taste and common sense gave Jackie a preeminence along American women who sought to emulate her. On her father's side of the family, none of the aunts were of Jackie's stylish flair and "preferred to look like their brothers," Caroline says. For that reason, her grandmother Rose Kennedy focused her grooming attention on her grandchildren.Caroline says she wanted to have poems in the collection that reflect "women's complicated relationship with beauty." The first selection in this section is Shakespeare's poetic description of Cleopatra in his play, "Antony and Cleopatra." He describes the last of the Egyptian phaerohs cruising down the Nile in a throne atop a gold-leafed barge, its sails scented with perfume. The craft is piloted by mermaids. When it docks, Cleopatra invites Mark Antony to dinner at her palace; he is so stunned by her beauty that he "pays his heart for what his eyes eat only."

Kim Addonizio answers Freud's question, "What Do Women Want?" with a poem that bears the query as its title. The answer? A shocking red dress, "flimsy and cheap, too tight," that she will wear until someone tears it off her. She says she wants to walk like she's the only person on earth and to confirm others' fears that she cares only about herself; she wants to wear it "like bones, like skin, it'll be the goddamned dress they bury me in." In "The Catch," Richard Wilbur describes his discomfort at trying be supportive to a significant lady in his life while she buys dress. As she gyrates in front of a full-length mirror, the poet realizes that what she really wants is unconditional approval —which he grants. A woman who is past her prime and knows it is the unhappy speaker in "Cosmetics Do No Good" by Steve Kowit. The speaker admits that there is no lipstick or rouge that can make her the beautiful young girl she once was, but nevertheless she continues to strive for beauty. In the grip of the God of Passion, the speaker is caught between "humiliation & desire, rectitude & lusty, disintegration & renewal, ruin & salvation."

in "Face Lift," Sylvia Plath describes the loss of identity she undergoes because of her surgical facelift and the aftermath while "I lie in secret, tapped like a cask, the years draining into my pillow" to please her first husband. Now she sees herself as "old sock-face," and suspects that the surgeons have put her old face in a lab jar. Awakening, she realizes that beneath her gauze is her new face, "pink and smooth as a baby." Hilaire Belloc says she is tired of love and romance and wants the steady pleasure of money, in "Fatigue." The World War I-era poet Rupert Brooke writes a kind of love poem to life in "The Great Lover." He lists some of his loves, including "the strong crust of friendly bread, radiant raindrops couching in cool flowers, blue-massing clouds, the good smell

of old clothes, moist black earthen mold, footprints in the dew." Behind this lyric is fear of death, but the poet says even after death he will rise again to "give what's left of love."

Amy Lowell's 1915 anti-war poem, "Patterns," is a poignant description of the grief experienced by a British noblewoman upon receiving news of the death of her lover, Lord Hartwell. The poem's impact is augmented by its style and structure, beginning very indirectly with the musings of the lady on patterns such as those of her gardens, her clothing, her life and concluding with the powerful outburst that her would-be husband is dead "fighting with the Duke in Flanders, in a pattern called war/Christ! What are patterns for?" Ralph Waldo Emerson's "The Rhodora" expresses the poet's delight a finding a beautiful wildflower that confirms his transcendental belief that "beauty is its own excuse for being." In "Roses Only" Marianne Moore reflects that "beauty is a liability rather than an asset," and realizes that the thorns that keep hands and hungry mouths at bay are the best part of a rose. Joy Harjo, in "Eagle Poem, compares life to the beauty of a soaring eagle who swoops and turns and completes a circle. The poet prays that she completes the circle of her life between life and death "in beauty, in beauty."

Beauty, Clothes and Things of This World Analysis

Women, like men, are attracted by beauty. Beauty is one of the traditional female goals, closely allied to clothes and jewelry, as assets in charming the opposite sex. As these poems attest, sometimes as in the case of Cleopatra and Mark Antony, seductive beauty can be used as a tool for power. The feminine aspiration for beauty knows no class or educational distinctions as evidenced by Sylvia Plath's "Facelift," in which the highly educated poet describes both the hopes and horrors of a facelift. For an everyday girl, sometimes just a cheesy red dress that is tawdry and revealing can do the trick, as in Kim Addonizio's poem. Breaking the middle class code of decency and good taste can provide a thrill that no circle pin can match, she suggests. While women seek beauty for its own sake and often to compete with other women, men are not immune to beauty of all kinds including feminine allure. But poet Rupert Brooke finds beauty in many things both man-made and natural. For Brooke, the world is an unending source of intoxicating beauty that he hope to go on enjoying even after death. The title of the book, "She walks in Beauty" by Lord Byron, suggests that women's exterior beauty is only a reflection of their inner purity and goodness that is an inspiration to others.

Motherhood

Motherhood Summary

Kennedy says having children is transformational experience for all women, and "becoming a mother is the best thing that ever happened to me." Mothers are our first teachers, she says, adding that "when your mother believes in you, you believe in yourself and when that happens, there is nothing you can't do."

William Butler Yeats, a leader of the Irish Literary Renaissance, expresses a sense of wonder mixed with trepidation in "A Cradle Song" as he revels in the innocent beauty of a baby but fears the inevitable loss of innocence and separation as the child grows up. Linda Pastan, during a painful and difficult delivery, concludes in "Notes from the Delivery Room" that "babies should grow in fields, common as beets of turnips; they should be picked and held root end up." Sharon Olds tells how a routine task, such as changing her son's socks, recalls profound and powerful memories in "Socks." The act of putting on her son's socks before playing Ninja Death with him makes her feel "intensely happy, as if we are back in the days of my greatest usefulness." Imminent separation from her 17-year-old college-bound known for his daughter is the theme of Sharon Olds' "High School Senior." Once again, Olds is caught in memories that go back to her pregnancy as she dreads the absence of her daughter's "breath in the house" and "the daily sight of her."

"Nobody Knows But Mother" by Mary Morrison expresses the unique and emotionally powerful bonds of motherhood. Each stanza asks a question about the circumstances of being a mother, and answers with the repetitive refrain, Nobody knows but Mother." Some of the questions in this litany: "How many buttons are missing today?" "How many bumps to be cuddled and kissed?" "How many cares does a mother's heart know?" Seamus Haney writes an elegaic poem to his mother called "In Memoriam MKH (1911-1984)" that recounts a moment when the poet and his mother peeled potatoes while the rest of the family werew at mass. Although the parish priest goes "hammer and tong" for religious formalities as she dies, her son remembers the moments when they were truly close, "her head bent toward my head, her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives." Julia Alvarez plays with the notions of "heart" and "art" in "Woman's Work." She remembers how her mother's heart was completely in her housework—which became her art. The poet says she didn't want to become a copy of her mother although her mother's example stayed with her, "a woman working at home on her art, housekeeping paper as if it were her heart."

e.e. cummings, known for his eccentric poetry, pays a kind of cubist tribute to his mother in "if there are any heavens my mother will(all by herself)have." His mother will enter "a heaven of black-red roses," and his father will stand nearby and bow to her, at which point the entire garden will also bow. A group of school children, exhilarated by being dismissed from school, race down the street in the winter snow, oblivious to the old woman who is too timid to cross the street in Mary Dow Brine's "Somebody's Mother."

But one of the group ("the gayest laddie") offers to help and she crosses the street with her hand on his shoulder. He tells his friends that he hopes someone would help his mother if she needs it; that night she says a prayer of thanks for the young man, "somebody's son," who helped her. The Book of Ruth, 1:16-17, is a profound affirmation of loyalty to a spouse, or a child. Its essence is that the bond is inseparable and eternal, surviving even after death. Elizabeth Alexander's "The Dream That I Told My Mother-in-Law" is spoken by the daughter-in-law, and tells of her growing awareness through conceiving and raising children of the scope of motherhood. As her mother-in-law tells her, "You are a mother now and you have to take care of the world."

A daughter who tries to help her mother organize her old possessions, mostly heirlooms, becomes irritated with the piles of decayed photo albums and the mouse-eaten baby shoes in the closet in "Mother's Closet," by Maxine Scates. Frustrated, she returns home and realizes that she has kept everything her mother ever gave her. "Ode" by Elizabeth Aleshipxander celebrates the maternal bodies lined up on the beach, with their "bosoms that slope, the wide nice bottoms." Their bodies, the poet says, show who they are (mothers) and what they do: "We labor in love." To a series of simple questions, such as "What's your name?", a woman in "Vietnam" answers "I don't know." But when asked "Are those your children?", the woman in Wislawa Szymborska's poem answers "yes." Mary Lamb, in "A Child," laments that too often a child is but "a plaything for an hour," but says if she ever forgets her child's "thousand ways" her life will be over. In "Blessing the Boats," Lucille Clifton compares her child growing up to launching a ship. She blesses the child and hopes that, wind at its back, it sails successfully through the waters of life.

Motherhood Analysis

All of the poems in this section on motherhood exhibit a high degree of respect and even admiration for women as mothers. Of all the callings of women, the poems suggest, motherhood is the one that is almost universally available and of most immediate impact on the family and world. This feminist theme reflects generations of young girls who have loved and tried to emulate their mothers. Some who have tried to move away from this matriarchal scheme are forced eventually to acknowledge the strong pull of motherhood, as in "Woman's Work" by Julia Alvarez, who realizes that her own mother's house work was her art. As the caretaker and life sustainer in families, the mother forges a bond with her daughter(s) of a wholly different type than fathers with their sons—a bond that looks forward and backward in perpetuation of the all-important role of mother. The profundity of motherhood's impact can be measured in the minutia of daily life, as in the bumps that need to be kissed and the socks that need to be found in "Nobody Knows But Mother." There is a power in the role of mother to shape personalities and lives, especially those of daughters that is not normally endowed on fathers.

Silence and Solitude

Silence and Solitude Summary

Caroline Kennedy, in her introduction to this section, observes that through all the years of preparing our children to survive in the world we become more dependent on them just as they become more independent of us. How we deal with solitude defines our character, and "in my experience, the people who are happy being alone are often the people everyone wants to be around." Kennedy says those who are involuntarily alone through death or abandonment face the toughest challenge "to confront the most fundamental questions of existence and reality."

Emily Bronté says she's pleased to be alone so she can become "a spirit wandering wide," in "I'm happiest when most away." Mark Strand says in "Keeping Things Whole" that solitude enables him to perceive how his mere existence and movement help to balance the world. Marianne Moore says artists feed upon solitude because it helps them to become "fishbones in the throat of the gang" and thus avoid conformity and mediocrity. Too much contact with the world and society can "degrade" one's authentic self, which should be protected from to much exposure to "the daily silliness of social events and parties," according to Constance Cavafy in "As Much As You Can." Georgia Johnson claims in "The Heart of a Woman" that her heart "goes forth with the dawn" and "falls back with the night." In returning, her heart tries to forget its dreams of freedom and "breaks, breaks, breaks." Rainier Maria Rilke says in "Sense of Something Coming" that he is like a flag that senses a wind rising before anyone in the nearby house and warns of the approaching storm, into which he is thrown "absolutely alone."

For an elderly couple who have been together for many years and experienced much together, the unspoken fear is—-which will die first. Although the two try to find serenity within themselves at the inevitable prospect of death, "in truth we go forward stumbling, afraid of the dark, of the cold and of the great overwhelming loneliness of being last," in "Death, Etc." by Maxine Kumin. According to Galway Kinnell, "When One Has Lived a Long Time Alone" there is a real possibility of becoming "self-estranged" as "the exile deepens" and one frantically tries to connect with others. The Zen approach to solitude is to simply with in the presence of the mountain until one's identity, or ego, slips away leaving only the mountain in "Zazen on Ching-t'ing Mountain" by Li Po. "The imperfect is our paradise," Wallace Stevens says in "The Poems of Our Climate." Solitude, for this poet, brings out in stark relief all of the defects of the world and in himself.

Silence and Solitude Analysis

The silence of serenity and the silence of death permeate this section. Solitude is more common in contemporary society because of more fluid social patterns and extended life expectancies, thus it is incumbent on women—who often outlive their husbands—to consider and embrace solitude, according to Kennedy. Emily Bronté finds peace of mind

in solitude, and a freedom not available in the ordinary course of ordinary living as she praises being "away." Solitude sharpens one's appreciation of things not normally considered, such as pigs, porcupines, earthworms and butterflies, according to Galway Kinnell in "When One Has Lived a Long Time Alone." In solitude, one realizes its unnatural condition while observing other creatures such as snakes, bullfrogs, and hermit thrush moving out of their habitats in search of a mate. In solitude, according to the early Christian mystics, one can hear the voice of God which is often inaudible in the daily to and fro of life.

Growing Up and Growing Old

Growing Up and Growing Old Summary

Caroline Kennedy dedicates this portion of the book to transitions from girls growing up to women entering middle age, "something no one wants to be." She observes that "the choices we make during these transitions determine who we are and who we become. Each stage of life is different than we imagine it will be."

In Margaret Atwood's "You Begin," the poetic narrator addresses a child learning to smudge colors and to make letters. In this first step toward the adult world, the poet advises the child that the world is "fuller and more difficult than I have said" but that the loss of innocence will be traded for more knowledge. Edna St. Vincent Millay expresses amazement that her childhood tantrums gave way to domestication and bed at "half-past eight" in "Grown-up." In "Puberty—With Capital Letters" by Ellen Hagan, the child surrenders dolls, kitchen sets and crayons for drinking, rebellion and "belly-button rings." Parneshia Jones delivers a surrealistic, Kafkaesque account of every woman's rite of passage in "Bra Shopping." Buffered between mother and bra saleswoman, she is poked, pulled and praised until she is finally freed to go home—with several white bras "with no bouncing at all."

An adolescent girl finds her mother's ritual washing of her hair troublesome and pointless in "Hairwashing" by Julia Alvarez. Try as she might, the mother can't wash away her daughter's blossoming womanhood: "I was growing up even as she scrubbed for dirt, horns, anything that looked like sin" and "she could not wring desire from my body." Mary Oliver takes account of the creatures around her in "The Summer Day," such as grasshoppers, swans and black bears. Struck by the brevity of human existence, she asks: "Tell me, what is it that you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" Denise Levertov, too, finds an epiphany in a summer day in "Living." She describes an encounter with a small red salamander that moves "cold and easy to catch" across her hand before she releases it. For short and pithy women's poetry, where better to look than Emily Dickinson? In "I Stepped from Plank to Plank," Dickinson describes covering the planks in a "slow and cautious way," with stars overhead and the sea beneath her. As a result, she gains "that precarious gait some call experience."

Lucille Clifton writes a poem "to my last period," in which she says goodbye to her constant companion of 38 years. She feels like "the grandmothers who, after the hussy has gone, sit holding her photograph and sighing, 'wasn't she beautiful? wasn't she beautiful?'" In a companion poem called "lumpectomy eve," Lucille Clifton describes dreaming about lips that nursed at her "lonely nipple." She comforts herself by chanting "love calls you to this knife." Advancing age makes Joyce Sutphen feel "Older, Younger, Both." In mid-life, she sees the beginnings in endings and the endings in beginnings. "I can end at the beginning or begin at the end," she writes. "You Can't Have It All" by

Barbara Ras uses the stock maternal admonition as a refrain to set off all the things you can have and be grateful for:

"the purr of the cat and the soulful look of the black dog, the skin at the center between a man's legs, Mozart, his many notes racing one another towards joy."

Discovering and plucking the first white hair from her head, Marge Piercy is "feeling thirty creep in my joints" as she documents in "Sign." At 20, the poet says she celebrated her birthday in her college town where "hunger was all of the time the taste in my mouth." Having "ripened" a bit, the poet says she is "gradually turning to chalk, to humus, to pages and pages of paper." Different perspectives on aging come into focus in "The Greatest Love" by Anna Swir. Her sweetheart tells a 60-year-old woman her hair is like pearls, but her children refer to her as an "old fool." Mary Ursula Bethell muses on the mutability of everything, especially her garden that will eventually fall into disorder and disappear in "Time." Rainer Maria Rilke notices one woman at a tea party who seems different, who stumbles after the group in "Going Blind." He realizes that her movement reflects blindness and the fact that "on the farther side" she may be flying instead of walking.

Elizabeth Jennings sees acceptance and gratitude in the life of an "Old Woman" who no longer has a lover nor children to raise; she exercises her nurturing instinct by arranging flowers that are "suppliant as children never were." Time puts no burden on her, and she places her own life in the vase with the flower arrangement. Sarah Teasdale embraces the memory-altering effects of age in "Let It Be Forgotten." Time is a "kind friend" who makes us old and erases memories such as "a fire that once was singing gold" and "a hushed football in a long-forgotten snow." Anne Sexton says that "if you have endured a great despair then you have done it alone" in her poem "Courage." Learning to ride a bike as a child and facing old age and death also require courage, she says.

Growing Up and Growing Old Analysis

The eagerness of the young child for experience and learning that leads to old age and eventual death is capsulized in "You Begin" by Margaret Atwood. The poet tells the child curious about everything that the world, like his hand, "begins, it has an end/this is what you will/come back to, this is your hand." Edna St. Vincent Millay strikes a note of irony in "Grown-up" when she muses that as a child she prayed and cursed with a fierce desire to become an adult so "I could retire at half-past eight?" Ellen Hagan describes the journey from childhood to adulthood as "the ultimate fast-forward," and Julia Alvarez calls her growing up a journey from innocence to sin despite her mother's persistent efforts to wash the dirt from both her hair and head: "She could not wring desire from my body or take the curl out of my hair," she reveals in "Hairwashing." Mary Oliver catches a grasshopper on a summer day and reflects that life is short, asking herself and the insect what they will do with their "one wild and precious life."

Lucille Clifton bids farewell to her menstrual period after 38 years and reflects that it always caused her trouble, in "to my last period." Ambivalence about growing older manifests itself in a cauldron of emotions for Joyce Sutphen in "Older, Younger, Both." She feels "sadder, wiser, neither together...older, younger, both st once." Although the process of growing up as described in these poems can be a disappointment and growing older a mixture of resignation and fear, the subtext in many poems is that wherever a woman may be in her life, others have gone before with strength and dignity and she is not alone or unique in her own journey.

Death and Grief

Death and Grief Summary

Poetry helped Caroline Kennedy deal with all the losses in her life, just as it did for her mother Jacquelin Onassis Kennedy. In fact, Caroline says, she finds solace in the same poetry that comforted her mother and shares some of it in this section and "putting love away"

Sappho, the lesbian poet of ancient Greece, writes that if death were such a great thing the gods would die in "We Know This Much." The most solemn industry enacted on earth comes the morning after death, according to Emily Dickinson in "The Bustle in a House." Gathering up the broken heart and "putting love away" are parts of this grim exercise. The finality of death is captured in "Never More Will the Wind" by H.D. "Like a bird out of our hand/Like a light out of our heart/You are gone." One ought to suffer grief in silence, according to Elizabeth Barrett Browning in "Grief." This suffering should be like a statue of the dead - silent and stony without tears. Springtime brings not joy but a desire to join her dead husband in "The Widow's Lament in Springtime" by William Carlos Williams. She turns her head away from the white blossoms on the plum tree that her husband of 35 years loved, and when her son tells her of white-blossomed trees in the meadow she wants to "fall into those flowers and sink into the marsh near them."

Although the poet, Jo McDougall, has ordered grief to leave after living in her house for seven years she returns weeping after just a few days. Even though the poet enjoys her solitude, "coffee for R," she invites grief back into her home. Christina Rossetti asks only that her beloved remember her with a smile after death in "Remember." If he should forget her for a while, she asks remembrance but no grief. "Better by far you should forget and smile than thgtat you should remember and be sad," Rossetti says. George Santayana recognizes that with the death of his beloved "a part of me hath passed away." He feels his aging process accelerate because of her death but is grateful for her "gift of charity, and young heart's ease, and the dear honor of your amity." Death, according to poet Oliver St. John Gogarty, gives us more to keep of the beloved than it touches with decay in "To Death." Ariwara No Narihara finds himself ill-prepared for death although he's heard many times that it is a "road which someday we all travel, in "That It Is A Road." It was Alfred Lord Tennyson who wrote these lines: "'Tis better to have loved and lost/Than never to have loved at all" in his "In Memoriam A.H.H." Walt Whitman identifies with his dead enemy in the coffin and gently kisses his face in "Reconciliation."

Death and Grief Analysis

Appropriately, this cluster of poems focuses on the inevitable product of aging—death. The absolute finality of death can be bitter, but the good qualities of the deceased can

live on in her offspring and in the hearts of those who knew and loved her. So the finality of death becomes not just a physical ending but a spiritual passage through time. Different attitudes toward grief emerge from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's admonition that one should bear pain in silence, to Emily Dickinson's observation that one should pick up the pieces of a broken heart, put away the possessions and memories of the beloved and yet hold onto both in love and memory. Christina Rossetti asks her survivors to occasionally remember her with joy rather then be continually sad about her death. Although death and grief are universal, the poems in this section suggest that both are easier to face when one has lived a life full of love and engagement with the world. Since death is inevitable, one should fill life with living it fully, these poets suggest.

Friendship

Friendship Summary

Although Caroline Kennedy observes "there are not as many poems about female friendships as one might expect," she assembles a wide range of poetry that celebrates the importance of friends - especially long-term friends with whom one has grown up.

Nikki Giovanni honors the fact that friends love each other without making love and share tears as well as laughs in "A Poem of Friendship." For her, the most important part of friendship is "what we are together." Roy Croft echoes this sentiment in "Love" by saying he loves his friend not just as a person "but for what I am when I am with you." Elizabeth Bishop entreats her friend Louise Crane to write more about what she's doing in New York City in "Letter to N.Y." The desire to know in detail about her friend's experiences is a way of staying connected and keeping the friendship alive. Poet Bernadette Mayer tells her friend of all the items she wants to buy for her (teapot, shirt, boots, lingerie) but could not because she has no money in "On Gifts for Grace." But she offers the poem as a form of praise. English mystic poet William Blake implores Hayley to be his enemy, for friendship's sake, in "To Hayley." Blake also writes of the power of resentments in "A Poison Tree" as he describes telling his wrath to a friend, so that it dissipates. But his resentment toward his foe goes unexpressed and turns into hatred, so that he is pleased to find his foe dead in his garden one morning.

Louise Gluck contributes two poems about her sister as friend—"August" and "Summer at the Beach." The former describes the two girls sitting in backyard furniture and painting their fingernails with colors that don't quite match their ads; the second tells of the sisters sitting on the summer beach as the poet is disgusted by adult bodies "completely committed to being male and female." She finds she can arrange her body in the sand so that "when I didn't move I was perfect." Ellen Dore Watson celebrates friends as "lifers who, even seven states away, are the porches where we land." Women as nurturing friends is the focus of "Woman Friend" by Julia Alvarez. The poet waves goodbye as her friend leaves on a Sunday morning, after a goodbye hug and promises they hope they won't have to fulfill while working to earn "the living husbands used to pay for." Naomi Shihab Nye wishes that her newly-divorced friend would dig up every plant in her garden and take them to "her new yard on the other side of town." In "Chocolate," Rita Dove writes longingly of a piece of chocolate and says, "I am ready to fall in love!"

Having been "chewed and gobbled and sucked" and then "spat out" by her man, the poet Michele Roberts finds consolation with her friend in "Magnificat." Her friend listens to her for three days as she pours everything out and soothes her like a mother with cakes and milk. "You touched the place where it hurt," she says. "Secret Lives" by Barbara Ras depicts the strange world of adult women in their roles as friends, rather than mothers, before the eyes of a child. The same woman, for example, who "smears peanut butter on bread" also leaves lipstick-blotted tissues on the floor of the women's

restroom for "a tired woman in a gray dress" to throw in the trash. Elizabeth Barrett Browning pens an emotional paean to her beloved dog in "To Flush, My Dog." She wishes him "a love that answers thine" for all his many fine traits.

Friendship Analysis

Friendship is the balm for the slings and arrows of life—a treasure to be nurtured and celebrated, these poems advocate. Although friendship is important to women, especially, there is a dearth of poetry on this subject. Those poems in this section honor the ability women have to surrender their egos with each other and share their innermost experiences with joy, tears, compassion and love. As Nikki Giovanni observes, friends can sometimes understand each other in a way that primary families can't and thus provide a certain kind of necessary support and nurturing. William Blake praises the kind of honesty among friends that can be soul-cleansing. Roy Croft, in "Love," acknowledges the value of a friend to help him become what he wants to be and for peering into his soul to draw out "All the beautiful belongings/That no one else had looked/Quite far enough to find." Ellen Watson, in "Girlfriends," exhorts the value of friends who would share "their last Godiva, Valium, amulet." As described and celebrated in these poems, friendship is a vital necessity for a good life and a pathway toward spiritual health.

How to Live

How to Live Summary

David Lehman's "May 2" is a beat-influenced call to his lover to go with him to Atlantic City, then to Paris in November where "we can be a couple of unknown Americans what are we waiting for let's go." Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson, in "From a Letter to His Daughter," calls upon her to live in the present moment unencumbered by yesterday or tomorrow. Marge Piercy tells what kind of people she likes best in "To be of use" including those who "jump into work head first," who "pull like water buffalo with massive patience," and who "do what has to be done, again and again." One must learn to "Leap Before You Look," according to poet W.H. Auden. "Look if you like," he says, "but you will have to leap." To be whole, one must "Try to Praise the Mutilated World," says Adam Zagajewski. In order to praise the nettles that grow in the abandoned homes of exiles, one must remember the "wild strawberries, drops of wine, the dew" of June. Echoing a Thoreau-like sentiment, W.H. Davies wonders in "Leisure" what the value of a hurried, worried life is worth if "we have no time to stand and stare." Poet Theodore Roethke finds surrender to nature and to the moment instructive when he "wake[s] to sleep" and "learn[s] by going where I have to go" in "The Waking." Poet Amy Lowell again expresses a strong pacifist impulse in "September, 1918" to match her powerful "Patterns." She hopes that "someday there will be no war," but until then she faces "the endeavor to balance myself upon a broken world."

Robert Frost expresses shame at himself for scaring away a bird whose song he found irritating in "A Minor Bird." He realizes his wrong "in wanting to silence any song." St. Teresa of Avila hopes that faith and trust in God will give people "freedom to sing, dance, praise and love" in her poem, "May today there be peace within." Greek poet/philosopher Euripides in "The Bacchae Chorus" says a person who "garners day by day the good of life" is happiest and most blessed. W.B. Yeats in "The Dawn" wishes that he could be "as ignorant as the dawn" so he could start each day of his life afresh. The anonymous poem "Don't Quit" summons the spirit that Caroline Kennedy's father wrote about in "Profiles in Courage," the strength to "stick to the fight when you're hardest hit." Chinese poet/philosopher Lao-Tzu expresses a Buddhist notion in "All Things Pass" to "take things as they come" since everything is always changing. Hope for the future suffuses "24th September 1945" by Nazim Hikmet because "the best days have yet to be lived."

Taking responsibility for one's own life is the theme of "The Journey" by Mary Oliver. It describes someone who is struck with the notion of "mending" her life; she ventures out into the world on a stormy night "determined to save the only life that [she] could save." Constantine Cavafy advises the reader not to be in haste to experience the "rare excitement" of Ithaka such as mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony" but to savor the journey filled with many Ithakas in the poem of the same name. "The Colder the Air" by Elizabeth Bishop celebrates the flawless aim of the "huntress of the winter air" whose aim is sure and her shot straight. "The least of us could do the same," she observes.

How to Live Analysis

How does one live the good life? This question has been pondered by poets and philosophers throughout history. This section presents a cross-section of how some poets live, or try to live. Robert Frost realizes that he is wrong is wanting to quiet any living creature from expressing itself. For both Marge Piercy and W.H. Auden, the key to good living is to throw one's self completely into life to see what can be experienced and learned. For both W. H. Davies and Lao-Tzu, surrender to life, to the moment, and to reality are the tools to find happiness. Amy Lowell tries to find balance within herself as she faces a violent and insane world. Taking life slowly and easily allows one to savor it and thus liver more fully, according to Constantine Cavafy. The solutions posed here for living a good life range from the universal to the personal, but all attempt to offer pathways to serenity and peace. For women, as for everyone else, these are important lessons and seeds for contemplation.

Characters

Cupidappears in Falling in Love

Although not mentioned by name, the arrows of Cupid play a large part in these poems. If cupidity is thought of as not just sexual passion but other forms of attachment for friends, children and animals, the scope of love becomes apparent. There is not only love of others but love of self, love of possessions and love of ideas or beliefs. Inevitably, poems for women involve every sort of love and attachment demonstrating that one can fall in love with someone of either sex, with one's own child, with music and with ideas. "Falling" in this context implies a loss of control, a surge of emotion that is intoxicating.

Sexappears in Making Love

Closely allied to cupidity is sexual passion which can be experienced in a variety of ways. "Making love" is the common euphemism for sex, as expressed in this clutch of poems from the medieval to modern. The very permeable membrane that separates love and sex can be easily crossed, as Wendy Cope says in "Summer Villanelle" (Making Love, p. 24): "But is it love? And is it true?/Who cares? This much I can't deny:/You know exactly what to do." Sex as passion, sex as surrender, sex as procreation, sex as silent when a young child sleeps nearby—these are all aspects of Eros that clearly suffuse everyone's lives.

Motherappears in Motherhood

Everyone has a mother and therefore everyone has a huge stake in motherhood. It has been observed that music closely attuned to the pace of the mother's heartbeat is more soothing and calming than music in another tempo. Motherhood is a life-changing event for both newborn and mother, and their bond continues to grow stronger, sometimes, than either consciously realizes. Sharon Olds, in "High School Senior," looks at her 17-year-old daughter and remembers that at the time of her birth she could not imagine life with her. Now she can't imagine life without her: "My daughter is free and she is in me—no, my love of, kissing her is in me, moving in my heart." Sometimes motherhood can be a thankless task, as reflected in Mary Morrison's "Nobody Knows But Mother." Some of these include sewing button, soothing bumps and bruises, darning stockings, fixing meals, kissing heads and more.

Lonelinessappears in Breaking Up

Loneliness is the vulnerability of all who love, and none can experience its bitter sting more profoundly than women. Probably because nature has

equipped women to be the nurturers and healers of our race, deprived of the opportunity to exercise those God-given instincts women may sometimes

try to fill the pit of loneliness with pets, shopping or even reckless love affairs. Of course, women are not the only ones who suffer loneliness as most men will attest. But for relationship-focused women, loneliness can be particularly trying. '"Tis better to have loved and lost/Than never to have loved at all," advises Alfred, Lord Tennyson in "In Memoriam A.H.H." This may be cold comfort for anyone who has lost a love, male or female, for whatever reason. But some women, such as Emily Bronte, seem to enjoy being alone: "I'm happiest when most away," as she says in the first line of her poem of the same name.

Wifeappears in Marriage

The women's movement probably has affected no other institution in society as much as the role of wife. "Value your selves and men despise/You must be proud, if you'll be wise," Lady Mary Chudleigh advises women in "To the Ladies." She tells women there is no difference between a wife and servant, and advises them to "shun! oh shun that wretched state" of marriage. The biblical perspective of a wife is simply a reflection of the patriarchal nature of ancient Jewish society where a wife was esteemed as a valuable possession much like livestock. In this view a wife is expected not only to bear children but to work at physical and other forms of labor until she drops from exhaustion. In "From a Survivor" by Adrienne Rich, a wife who has devoted her entire life to her deceased husband reflects on his body when they first came together: "It is no longer the body of a god or anything with power over my life."

Acceptanceappears in Love Itself

In a love relationship, acceptance of one's self and one's partner serves as a foundation for acceptance of love as an ongoing reality, Without that acceptance, it is questionable whether real love exists as in "Jamesian" by Thom Gunn: "Their relationship consisted/In discussing if it existed." And the acceptance that comes with love is something elemental, as described in "The Saller Orchid" by Amy Clampitt: "Love is a climate small things find safe to grow in." Perhaps the most eloquent description of the acceptance that love provides is in Corinthians 13:1-13: "Love is patient, love is kind. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love never fails."

Working appears in Work

Work has always been the lot of women—whether in the home, or in the aircraft assembly plant, or in the New Orleans whorehouse. In some cases, work has meant salvation for women but in others, sadly, it has represented just another, more severe, form of exploitation. In "Letters from Storyville" by Natasha Trethewey, a small town girl leaves for the city and for opportunity. She is enticed into a house of prostitution where

she is paraded around like a piece of meat and auctioned off for the night where "in my borrowed gown I went upstairs with the highest bidder." Another aspect of working women with their high-pressure urban life is described in "Worked Late on a Tuesday Night" by Deborah Garrison who presents the "Little Miss Phi Beta Kappa" as stressed, starving and guilt-ridden for the time she doesn't spend with her children and the love she doesn't make with her husband.

Deathappears in Death and Grief

Death is an inevitability that strikes the poets whose work is represented in this collection as fearsome, threatening, sad, lonely, and even beautiful. To Sappho, the ancient Greek lesbian poet, Death is "an evil," an ugly counterpoint to the pleasures and accomplishments of life, in "We know this much." To Elizabeth Barrett Browning in "Grief," death is something to be endured British-style with a stiff upper lip and no unseemly displays of emotion. For the widow who narrates "The Widow's Lament in Springtime" by William Carlos Williams, "sorrow is my own yard." Death of one's enemy in wartime, according to Walt Whitman in "Reconciliation," is "beautiful as the sky,"

Woman as Friendappears in Friendship

Women's capacity to form enduring relationships of all kinds—especially friendships—is just one of the ways they manifest their unique way of combining body and soul. These poems demonstrate and celebrate the friendships women form with each other, with animals, with their children and with men. It is probably in women's ability to form and sustain relationships that men have the most to learn from the feminine side of their own personalities. Nikki Giovanni in "A Poem of Friendship" and Roy Croft in "Love" both see in their friendships with women a transformational power that activates their own powers of love. Giovanni finds her friendship makes her capable of love because of the love they share but do not make, "because of what we are together." Croft loves his friend "not only for wht you are, but for what I am with you."

Inner Peaceappears in How to Live

The message from the poems in this section is to throw one's heart and soul into every undertaking and into every day, or, carpe diem. Whether work, study, relationships or play, committing to a full life leads to inner satisfaction and inner peace, as expressed by David Lehman ("May 2"), Ralph Waldo Emerson ("From a Letter to His Daughter"), and Marge Piercy ("To be of use"). Perhaps W.H. Auden expresses this abandonment to life in "Leap Before You Look," in which he equates a sense of danger with living life to its fullest, and eventual peace. "Our dream of safety has to disappear," he tells his beloved. "To rejoice when no one is there/Is even harder than to weep." In "May today there be peace within," St. Teresa of Avila exhorts readers to "trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be" so that you can "allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love."

Objects/Places

Beauty

Women are very much connected to, defined by and defining beauty. The title poem, "She Walks in Beauty" by Lord Byron, defines the limitless types of beauty that a woman can possess: "All that's best of dark and bright/Meet in her aspect and her eyes" and "her face where thoughts serenely sweet express/How dear their dwelling place."

Valentine

In juxtaposition with "fine" and "mine," the word "valentine" becomes a repetitive beat in "A Very Valentine" by Gertrude Stein. Symbolically, the valentine has come to represent love in all its forms. In this poem, the person who is a valentine is not defined by race, gender, age or ethnicity—thus expressing the universality of love and of valentines.

Maidenhead

Maidenhead is the hymen, and the term is used to signify virginity. In "Song," John Keats implores his loved one to join in a celebration of youth and passion and to lose her maidenhead.

The Frick

The Frick Museum in New York City is where Frank O'Hara wants to take his girlfriend for the first time in "Having a Coke with You."

Knossos

Knossos is a Greek island to which the lesbian poet Sappho calls the goddess Aphrodite, urging her to leave the island of Crete and "pour heavenly nectar into gold cups" thus creating "heavenly joy."

Hairy diadem

John Donne uses the expression "hairy diadem" to refer to his lover's sex in "To His Mistress Going to Bed." The gleeful, frankly erotic poem expresses the poet's delight in seeing his mistress naked as she prepared for bed: "Off with that wiry Coronet and show/The hairy diadem which on you doth grow."

Georgia

Disillusioned by love and marriage, Georgia is where the narrator in "I'm Going to Georgia" hopes to find refuge and healing from her relationship. She hopes to find "a cabin on the mountain so high/Where the wild birds and turtle dove can hear my sad cry."

Flash Gordon soapappears in Marriage

Flash Gordon soap is what the narrator in Gregory Corso's poem "Marriage" imagines will be in the bathroom of his girlfriend's parents' home when he goes there for his first visit.

Cadillacappears in Night Waitress

The embittered woman filled with self-loathing in Lynda Hull's poem "Night Waitress" dreams of hearing a new song from the jukebox where she works, "a song that rolls through the night like a big Cadillac."

Flandersappears in Patterns

Amy Lowell's "Patterns" describes the configuration of a garden as she grieves the loss of her husband-to-be in World War I. She provides highly descriptive lines about the patterns of nature and those of man evident in the garden, and concludes buy saying that her lover was killed "in a pattern called war" fighting in Flanders—a geographical area that encompasses parts of France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Themes

Women's changing roles and images in poetry

This collection contains poems that depict and insinuate women in a variety of roles, from subservient housewife to liberated professional, from seductress to CEO, from people-pleaser to outspoken hussy. These are historical images of women through the ages. Shakespeare's idealized and romanticized vision of Cleopatra is juxtaposed with the plight of the working mother who teeters on the brink of exhaustion trying to be both responsible parent and capable professional. In "Night Waitress" by Lynda Hull, she thinks of the unpleasant features of her job "that make me stare out the window or want/to try every bar down the street." Returning after work in the morning, she sees men going to work but is too exhausted to talk to anyone. She recalls her Slavic mother who "washed the floor on hands and knees below the Black Madonna" and wonders whether her life is any better. A woman helps her friend clean her house and realizes it is a kind of art and an expression of her heart, in "Woman's Work" by Julia Alvarez. But, as a poet, she appreciates that she doesn't have to clean houses and can work at home on her art which allows just as much expression of her heart.

In "The Age of Great Vocations," Alane Rollings mocks the idea of feminine equality in the workplace as she scours newspaper ads fruitlessly searching for a job through the male-centered business world. Despite 13 letters of reference praising her, she realizes that "fooling a man is a full-time job."

Women's true nature

Some of the more modern poems in this collection offer the reader an unfiltered view of how women really see themselves, other women, and men without the web of social graces and feminine stereotypes that have served through the years only to muffle and extinguish the identity and creativity of half the human race. "I Do Not Love Thee" by Caroline Norton asserts her right to her own feelings and opinions, however ambivalent. Although the poet asserts that she does not love the person to whom the poem is addressed, she does admit to yearning and finding joy and pleasure in his company as well as his work. In fact, she denies loving him so vehemently that her denial seems a kind of affirmation of that love. Christina Rossetti makes an unambiguous refusal of affection in "No, Thank You, John" in which she clearly offers friendship but not love. Both poems affirm the truth that women, like men, are free to make up their own minds independently and at times to even entertain ambivalent feelings.

In "What Do Women Want?" Kim Addonizio answers Freud's puzzling question by asserting that she wants a cheap red dress so she can tweak the middle class sensibilities of her neighbors by being a "bad girl" and confirming their worst fears about her character. Marge Piercy in "What's That Smell in the Kitchen" declares her hatred of fixing meals and creates a manifesto for women who feel the same way. "All over

America women are burning/food they're supposed to bring with calico," she gleefully exclaims. In "Letters from Storyville," a young rural woman writes to her friend from New Orleans of her gradual debasement and devaluation as a prostitute, but says it is because of her "nature to please." This poem crystallizes the abject passivity of women that accompanies exploitation and is itself a statement about how women's true nature has been misunderstood and dis respected throughout time.

Women's anger

As part of the natural evolution of women, anger is inevitable. A housewife in "What's That Smell in the Kitchen?" by Marge Piercy is burnt up that the dinner is burnt up: "Anger sputters in her brainpan, confined but spewing out missiles of hot fat" like a steak on a barbeque. "If she wants to grill anything, it's her husband spitted over a slow fire." Julia Alvarez remembers when she helped her mother clean the house and longed to be outside with her friends; "she kept me prisoner in her housebound heart," she says in "Woman's Work." Angry that her mother seemed to expect her to follow in her path, the poet realizes that her rebellion in becoming a poet instead of a housekeeper really is a mimicry of her mother: she works at home on her art (poetry), just as her mother did and

thus "became my mother's child." Lynda Hull, in "Night Waitress," wonders whether she is any better off than her Slavic mother who "washed the floor on hands and knees below the Black Madonna." The waitress is too tired to speak to any of the men going to work in the morning when she is leaving work and wants "to try every bar down the street." Amy Lowell expresses anger at warfare in "September, 1918" by describing how it can ruin an otherwise perfect afternoon: "Someday there will be no war/Then I shall take out this afternoon/And turn it in my fingers/For I have time for nothing/But the endeavor to balance myself/Upon a broken world."

Style

Point of View

The point of view changes according to the individual poem. In some cases, a male poet writes in the persona of a woman; in others, a female poet addresses other women; in yet others female poets seem to be speaking to themselves of eternal truths. For example, the ancient Greek lesbian poet Sappho, entreats the love goddess Aphrodite to "leave Crete and come to this holy temple" in Knossos. She asks in "To Aphrodite of the Flowers, at Knossos" that Aphrodite "pour heavenly nectar into gold cups/and fill them gracefully with sudden joy." In the section on Motherhood, the Irish poet William Butler Yeats in "A Cradle Song" assumes the voice of a mother speaking to her infant. The mother delights in the fact "angels are stooping above your band and says "I shall miss you when you have grown." Margaret Walker in "Lineage" addresses herself with a question: "My grandmothers are full of memories/Smelling of soap and onions and wet clay/My grandmothers were strong/Why am I not as they?""

Setting

The settings for the poems are as individual as the poems themselves. In Amy Lowell's "Patterns," the setting is a quiet garden retreat where the poet can express herself. In "I Want You Women Up North to Know" by Tillie Olsen, the setting is Mexico as a woman writes of the horrible working conditions and blighted lives of the Mexican women who create the "dainty children's dresses" bought by Americans at Macy's, Wanamakers, Gimbels [and] Marshall Fields. In the folk song "I'm Going to Georgia," a disappointed wife declares her intention to escape her drunkard husband and go to the mountains of Georgia and live among "the wild birds and turtledove." Although the geographic and social settings differ, the poems have in common a setting in the human heart—the very special place of the feminine heart.

Language and Meaning

Once again, each poem displays an individual kind of language and meaning appropriate to its subject and author from Shakespeare to Sappho. Sonnet 116 by Shakespeare is perhaps one of the simplest, openhearted declarations of love ever uttered and for hat reason is considered an immortal classic: "Love is not love/Which alters where it alterations finds/Or bends with the remover to remove/Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks/But bears it out to the edge of doom." This is 16th Century English expressed so clearly that it is still transcendent 500 years later. Robert Herrick, an English poet of the 17th Century, uses the language of his time to express the youthful enthusiasm of love in springtime in "Corinna's Going a-Maying." His poem begins with a command to his beloved that she jump out of bed and enjoy the day "Whenas a thousand virgins on this day/Spring sooner than the lark to fetch in May."

Herrick's love poem is considerably more lustful than Shakespeare's: "Come, let us go, while we are in our prime/And take the harmless folly of the time/We shall grow old apace, and die/Before we know our liberty." The Beat poet Gregory Corso, debating whether to get married in "Marriage," decides he should take the leap despite its challenges: "So much to do! like sneaking into Mr. Jones' house late at night/and covering his golf clubs with 19920s Norwegian books/Like hanging a picture of Rimbaud on the lawnmower."

Structure

Structure of each poem is unique to its content and feeling. For example, in Sonnet 116 Shakespeare uses the traditional rhyming patters, A-B, A-B, C-D, C-D, E-F, E-F, G-G in iambic pentameter rhythm of one stressed syllable followed by a second unstressed syllable. This is a cadence very close to that of everyday speech, and Shakespeare used it in both his plays and sonnets.Lady Mary Chudleigh in "To the Ladies," uses a consistent A-A, B-B, C-C rhyming pattern for 24 lines, also in iambic pentameter with occasional accents deleted to conform to the cadence, as in: "And all the fawning flatt'rers hate/Then shun, oh! shun that wretched state." If the poet had used the correct spelling of flatterers, it would have thrown off the iambic pentameter rhythm so she used poetic license to compress the word into two instead of three syllables. An irregular rhythmic and rhyming scheme known as blank verse appears in Margaret Atwood's "Variation on the Word Sleep." For example, "I would like to watch you sleeping/which may not happen./I would like to watch you,/sleeping. I would like to sleep with you, to enter/your sleep as its smooth dark wave/slides over my head."

Quotes

"Very fine is my valentine very mine and very fine." (A Very Valentine, Gertrude Stein, p. 9)

"O, cut the sweet apple and share it." (Song, John Keats, p. 10)

"Nothing in the world is single; all things by a law divine/In one spirit met and mingle. Why not I with thine?" (Love's Philosophy, Percy Shelley, p. 13)

"And here, Queen Aphrodite, pour heavenly nectar into gold cups and fill them gracefully with sudden joy." (To Aphrodite of the Flowers, at Knossos, Sappho, p. 17)(

"(but you're killing said she, but it's life said he, but your wife said she, now said he) ow said she" (may i feel said he, E.E. Cummings, p. 26)

"Come, let us go, while we are in our prime/And take the harmless folly of the time!/We shall grow old apace, and die/Before we know our liberty./Our life is short, and our days run/As fast away as does the sun." (Corinna's Going a-Maying, Robert Herrick, p. 29)

"License my roving hands, and let them go/Before, behind, between, above, below." (To His Mistress Going to Bed, John Donne, p. 33)

"Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away/For, lo, the winter is past/The rain is over and gone/The flowers appear on the earth/The time of the singing of birds is come/And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." (Song of Solomon, 2:1-17, 3:1-5, p. 35)

"In the half darkness we look at each other and smile/and touch arms across this little, startlingly-muscled body—this one whom habit of memory propels to the ground of his making." (After Making Love We Hear Footsteps, Galway Kinnell, p. 41)

"From what we cannot hold the stars are made." (Youth, Osip Mandelstam, p. 44)

"I know a man that's a braver man/And twenty men as kind/And what are you, that you should be/The one man on my mind?" (The Philosopher, Edna St. Vincent Millay, p. 49)

"Parting is all we know of heaven/And all we need of hell." (My Life Closed Twice Before its Close—" Emily Dickinson, p 58)

"And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain/For unremembered lads that not again/Will turn to me at midnight with a cry." (Sonnet XLII, Edna St. Vincent Millay, p. 62)

"Come live with me and be my love/And we will all the pleasures prove/That Valleys, groves, hills and fields/Woods or steepy mountain yield." (The Passionate Shepherd to His Love, Christopher Marlowe, p. 73)

"O but what about love? I forget love not that I am incapable of love it's just that I see love as odd as wearing shoes." (Marriage, Gregory Corso, p. 74)

"My love is such that rivers can not quench/Nor aught but love from thee, give recompense." (To My Dear and Loving Husband, Anne Bradstreet, p. 80)

"Value yourselves, and men despise/You must be proud, if you'll be wise." (To the Ladies, Lady Chudleigh, p. 83)

"I also erred in overmuch admiring/What seemed in thee so perfect that I thought/No evil durst attempt thee." (Paradise Lost, John Milton, p. 90)

"Favor is deceitful, and beauty is in vain/But a woman that feareth the Lord/She shall be praised." (The Good Wife, Proverbs 31-10-31, p. 91)

"I give up being earth, I give up being a flower just to stay near you/And I become dust to live with you." (Letter from My Wife, Nazim Hikmet, p. 99)

"In plenty or in want, there will still be you and me, always the two of us. Isn't that better than always prospering alone?" (A Farmer's Calendar, p. 102)

"There is nothing to think but drink of love and knowledge, and love's knowledge/When after and before are no more, and no more masks or unmasking but only basking." (The First Morning of the Second World, Delmore Schwartz, p. 118)

"When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. But when I became a man, I put childish ways behind me." (Corinthians 13:1-13).

"I want a song that rolls through the night like a big Cadillac, part factories to the refineries squatting on the bay, round and shiny as the coffee urn warming my palm." (Night Waitress, Lynda Hull, p. 126)

"You know what all the world knows: time was invented/So workdays could come to a close." (The Age of Great Vocations, Alane Rollings, p. 144)

"I was once roast duck on your platter with parsley but now I am spam/Burning dinner is not incompetence but war." (What's That Smell in the Kitchen?, Marge Piercy, p. 149)

"He had a whim that sunlight carried blessing. And I answered, "It shall be as you have said."/Now he is dead." (Patterns, Amy Lowell, p. 173)

"Babies should grow in fields/common as beets or turnips/they should be picked and held/root end up, soil spilling/from between their toes—and how much easier it would be later/returning them to earth." (Notes from the Delivery Room, Linda Pastan, p. 182)

"Whither thou goest, I will go; and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried." (Ruth, 1:16-17)

"The imperfect is our paradise." Note that, in this bitterness, delight, since the imperfect is so hot in us, lies in flawed words and stubborn sounds." (The Poems of Our Climate, Wallace Stevens, p. 218)

Topics for Discussion

What symbolism, or metaphors, does Sappho use in her poem, "To Aphrodite of the Flowers, at Knossos" to refer to femal sexuality?

What is Gregory Corso's attitude toward marriage in his poem of the same name?

What is the attitude of the narrator in "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning toward his wives and toward women?

How does the eccentric style of e.e. cummings enhance, or detract from, his poem "may i feel said he"?

What are the primary traits of women as described by Rudyard Kipling in "The Female of the Species"?

How does the narrator in "Night Waitress" by Lynda Hull feel about herself?

What is the answer to the question posed by Kim Addonizio in "What Do Women Want?"

How does the 16-year-old narrator of "Bra Shopping" by Parneshia Jones feel about her first bra buying experience with her mother?

What is the overriding theme, or message, of "Patterns" by Amy Lowell?

How does Rita Dove feel about chocolate in her poem of the same name?