

M-23

Ulysses

①

②

*Oless intense

In Ulysses, Tennyson combines the language of adventure with an ^{*①}enervated, music. Do you agree with such a view of the poem?

OR

Compare and contrast the moods and the philosophies in Ulysses and the Lotus Eaters.

OR

Compare and contrast Tennyson's lyrical techniques and objectives in the two poems.

fusion
poetry -
Intellectual
+ historical
+ romantic
poetry.

The Victorian Age in English poetry, like the modern age, is characterized by its ^{*②}eclecticism. Therefore, it is somewhat of an exception to Coleridge's thesis, that English literature is a series of oscillations between the intellectual and the sentimental, the classical or the neo-classical and a romantic, the analytical with the emotional, attitudes to poetry and its subjects, being not removed in time from the hey day of Romanticism, the Victorian poets could escape its influence (W's The Prelude was published in the year of his death, 1850, incidentally it was in the same year that Tennyson's Magnum Opus, In Memoriam published). However, with the and the development of sci and other philosophical intellectual movements, &

② was also simultaneously a call for rationality and order in all things. This Victorian neo-classicism and traditionalism (in religion represented by the reactionary and repressive Oxford Movement; in politics, by the ruthless putting down of disturbances and the ... in of a new age of repression, finally, in literature by the expurgation or the bowdlerization of the ribald, the blasphemous (speaking against God) and the profane (immoral)), would always be tempered by the vestiges or the lingering influence of Romantic thoughts and attitudes. Although they emphasize on order, balance, reason and objectivity would increasingly be highlighted as the age progressed, the romantic traits formed a strong undercurrent which cannot be totally ignored by modern critics. The Victorian didactic and edifying tendencies often marred or spoiled its poetry; however, most of the famous poems of Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, Fitz Gerald and others, had no intensions of preaching or reforming society. Like the 20th English poets, the Victorians inherited the ... of all the ...

* i. censor-ship.

but

in English poetry and thought. In fact, even the Elizabethans can be said to have directly influenced the Victorian poets. This is especially true of a poet like Tennyson, who as Sampson, has remarked: "Unlike W. Coleridge, Byron, Keats and Shelley, developed intense domestic and national affections. In other words, Tennyson was considerably influenced by the patriotism that he discovered in the chronicle plays of Shakespeare, his predecessors and his successors."

Shakespeare

*1. associated with seafaring or life on the sea.

*2. enforced recruitment of riff-raff for service in the navy; a dreadful custom prevalent in 18th England.

The ^{#1}maritime adventure has been an integral part of the English heritage, right from the 17th (unless we also count the Anglo-Saxons) in which case it can be dated even earlier. Even in the days of the terrifying "press-gangs", English men still felt an irresistible attraction for sea life. Like Coleridge's treatment of the supernatural, Tennyson's handling of the adventure story is also remarkable for its projection of the inner self into outer events - or, in other words, there is a simultaneous externalisation and internalisation, an externalisation of inner thoughts & moods, and an internalisation of the actual at hand. Tennyson's

(14)

Typical Englishmen felt in turn both the urge to the life of adventure as well as the desire to settle down, to cultivate and develop his own small patch of English soil. This torque of tensions has exercised the English race (always), and its presence can be clearly detected even in the compositions of professed adventure-story writers like Dickens and Smollett. The Victorian Age, like the Elizabethan, was an age of unrest, discovery, exploration and conquest, if not for other

European nations then at least for England. Even as far back as c. 1832-1842 when Tennyson wrote the poem, the British felt a call to go out and colonise, and even set up empires in diff. parts of the world. Within 1850, "the jewel in the crown" (India) would become a part of the British Empire. These were "striving" times and ^{many} Englishmen were called upon to serve the empire in its far-flung outposts. The English were to be seen in the snows of Canada as well as in the great Antarctic Desert of Australia.

Very few Englishmen, however, have been able to

Masefield
- Salt
Walt
Ballads

or forces, satisfactorily. A Masefield (who has the courage to opt definitely for sea-life as opposed to land-life), is rather the exception than the rule. Even though Douglas Bush has pointed out that the Tennyson who wrote Ulysses was a poor, struggling young poet the conservative tendencies, the attraction to tradition and orthodoxy (which, perhaps, made him such a serious person, and ultimately enabled him to become poet laureate), can be seen very clearly even here. ^{It is} ~~no~~ wonder then, that G. K. Chesterton has observed how Tennyson was the only conservative among the majority of Victorian poets, who were ^{*10} radicals. Chesterton also labels Tennyson's philosophic & political stance as "a temperate idealism". This is perhaps an indirect result of what Chesterton has elsewhere described as "the Victorian compromise". Ulysses has been interpreted variously by different critics, and like every great work of literature it has stirred up quite a controversy, lasting into our times. For instance Carlyle, with his heroes and hero-worship, has much to praise in the poem while Eliot finds in it an "elegiac" tone. The Victorians and the moderns are constantly

*1. extremist

Carlyle's
hero
Eliot's
elegy
hero-worship
none for
none days

⑥

Philistines
→ they become
opponent
any reform
ment. they
have no
taste for
culture

devised over the ultimate message of interpretation of the poem. Most modern critics believe that the poem is a dramatic monologue in which U. denounces Telimaos for not having taken after him; his speech and name greatly resembling Arnold's attack upon the "Philistines", in Culture & Anarchy. According to this interpretation U. embodies or expresses the sad recognition of the part of an aged father, hero and king, that his son had not followed in his footsteps. Projecting, or rather elaborating upon Eliot's impressions, it may also be said that the poem is an elegy in the sense that it nostalgically recalls an bygone age of heroes, and bewails the fact that it will be succeeded by an age of pygmies. However, it would perhaps be too modern an interpretation to take Eliot's use of the word "elegiac" in the Joycean sense. The father here, seems to clearly recognize his sons difference from his own, and it may be that Thompson's Ulysses is very satisfied that this should be so:
"Most blameless is he, centred in
of common s. . . ."

'alt-ego'
- second-
self.

7) in offices of tenderness, and pay ⁽²⁾
feet-adoration to my household god,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine?
Where then is the elegiac tone to
be discovered? Is it to be found in
Ulysses's homesickness or nostalgia
for sea-life or the life of adventure?
Or, is it to be detected in his
had recognition of the passing
of an age of heroism (when
'men... strove with Gods'), and the
dawn or the advent of an age
of mediocrity? Homer's hero,
Ulysses, had as his rival and
his antagonist, Poseidon, the
Greek God of the sea who ~~was~~ a
brother to Zeus and Hades, and
one of the conspirators along with
Hera and Athena against
Zeus. In the Odyssey, Poseidon
becomes hostile to Ulysses, (or
more properly Odysseus), whom he
prevents from returning home
because Ulysses has killed
Polypheus, a cyclops giant,
and a son of Poseidon by his
union with the nymph, Thoosa.
Homer's Ulysses, in other words, is
a home-loving man, prevented
by the ^(unfavourable) adverse winds, tides and
currents, from returning home to
Ithaca. Throughout the poem, in spite
of the intermediate disclaimer, T.
presents Ulysses as a man made

diff.
between
father-son
diff. with
old story
of Odysseus.

(8)

Telemachus. Whether in the Iliad or in the Odyssey, Odysseus or Ulysses, is presented as a man with an ambivalent nature, as contrasted with the other heroes, who are monolithic in structure. Ulysses or Odysseus is alternately described as the "arch-adventurer" or "arch-schemer." In other words Ulysses is a diplomat and a politician, in addition to being a hero. Just as he is about to be transformed into the Byronic or the Marlovian hero, T., in the 2nd stanza, tempers his protagonist's hero and presents a sort of compromise in Ulysses's world-view. Ulysses, too, could be described as an "over-reacher" (Levin's phrase describing Marlow's heroes), accepting his acknowledgement of Telemachus's worth. However, the impression of an aristocratic contempt and a charismatic hero, still remain. Ulysses seems to be scornful or even super-criticisms about the lives of the "dudges" like Telemachus. T. was far too young to resist the temptation of indulging in his own brand of hero-worship. Homer's hero, (who, in Homer's poems, though an ideal type, is much closer to the common man). in T.'s poem, becomes the

* ①
 a hero
 which had
 no complex-
 -tion, he
 self-contem-
 -diction.

* ②. A
 person
 xised by
 great
 pride, by
 pride even
 in his
 sin, also
 by his
 contempt
 for ordinary
 people.

* ③. xised
 by lawless
 ambition.
 (in add.
 to Byronic
 hero).

* ④.
 scornful
 as well as
 indifferent.

* ⑤. Carlyle's
 div. of
 socialistic
 dudges of
 the poor, the
 sweating

Milton's
Salon

symbol of a ⁽⁹⁾ sublime restlessness. The Miltonic overtones and the blank verse remind us of Saloon, another habit of timidity and servility. There is an obvious pride in experience, simultaneously with the expressions of dissatisfaction with it (which is also another kind of pride):

"I am a part of all that I have met
Yet all experience is an arch where through
Gleams that untravelled world whose margin
Fades
For ever and for ever when I move."

There is the implication throughout that life of Telemachus and those of his kind, is a kind of what is colloquially called "vegetation".

These people "vegetate" or merely exist, rather than "live" or enjoy life, as Ulysses does:

"Although to breathe were life." The word "boards" is used twice, once in the fifth line and again in the twenty ninth line, and in both cases it is used uncomplimentarily. In the fifth line a contempt for the cautious bourgeois life, and its petty cares and harassments. The 2nd use seems to be in the sense of a futile attempt to prolong a life which has approached its end. We are

bourgeois
-ie

*10-
saying

famous dictum: (10)

"One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name."
The people of Ithaca do not know
him, not merely because of his
repeated and prolonged absences,
but also because he is a man
of a completely different view and
world-view. Besides through his long
travels in quest of truth and
happiness, he has also generated
expectation of returning as a man
endowed with superior wisdom and
courage:

"I am become a name; again,
when his mariners follow him
through the thunder & the
sunshine and giving joyous
welcome to all joys and adversities,
they strive even with the gods, if
they are so required. "Free hearts,
free foreheads...." — free, one
may ask, in what sense? Is
it freedom from the mean and
the ordinary concerns and toils
of daily life? Or is it freedom
from state convention, meaningless
and obviously unjust laws ("I
mete and dole/ Unequal laws unto
a savage race"), and all the
inglorious moments of the many
deaths that cowards die many
times before their actual deaths.

Ulysses
is unknown

freedom
from
life or
unjust
laws

*. ①
a person
who mad
or obsessed
with one
great idea

*. 2. Late
Victorian
author of
the way
of all
flesh &
Erewhon

female
attitude

T. is Ulysses (11) in fact falls between (2) two stools. He has neither the ^{absolutely} lawless ambitions of the megalomaniac, nor does he combine in himself the love for domesticity with the necessity for travel, that we see in Homer's hero. This dualistic has been remarked upon by many critics, and most forcefully by Robert Graves, who, in his book on Greek Myths, goes to the extent of subscribing to Samuel Butler's (2) theories about a female authorship for Homer's Odyssey. Graves quotes from Butler's proofs, supporting the latter's contention (argument): firstly Ulysses has an inexact of geography; secondly, his detailed knowledge of woman's duties in the married state (revealed in his wise advice given to the princess, Nausicaa on the eve of her marriage); and lastly, his whitewashing of Penelope's sex, after his own homecoming. Graves acknowledges his debts to Samuel Butler & the latter's book Authorship of the Odyssey, and supports his assertions about Nausicaa being the actual composer of this epic. Other critics who have not gone to such extremes, however, still emphasize that ^{Homer's} Ulysses (Odysseus) is a man who is a

island by his travels, does so
unwillingly, always longing to
sea; were it but the smoke
rising from his native island?
When he pleses Nausicaa, he
reveals his intimate knowledge
of the secrets of domestic happiness
& harmony. He advised the girl
that: "... there is nothing better
and nobler than when man &
wife are of one heart & mind in
a house; a grief to their foes,
to their friends great joy, but
their own hearts know its best."
Besides, the original Odysseus,
unlike the other epicheroes is
not a simple & straight-forward
~~creation~~ xer. In addition, to the
usual distinguishing xistics of
epic heroes, Odysseus has an
element of cunning & shrewdness
in his xer. In other ways, however,
he is often rather dull & unimpressi
Firstly, he is middle-aged, short,
thickset (with baddy legs), &
extremely awkward when he stands
before ~~an~~ audience. The only
xistic that T. has preserved
intact from Homer's poem is the
oratorical skill of the hero. In
conversation, whether in H. or in T.
Ulysses / Odysseus is supremely
skillful, & it may be said
equally correctly of both poem

Odysseus
cunning &
shrewd
unlike normal
heroes

(12)

"he does his work, I mine." However, most critics of the 20th Cen. refused to look at the poem in this way. Bonamy Dobree and Batho, in their book, The Victorians & After, have pointed out how T.S., like other Victorian poets, was often hindered in his poetry by the need imposed by the Victorian reading public, upon him & others, of giving 'a doctrine, a revelation, or an interpretation' of life in his poems. As with any other poet-didacticism & edification would spoil the overall effect of many of T.S.'s poems.

*1.
desire to
give moral
instruction

Like T.'s other experiments in the epic form, Ulysses is also marked by patches of splendor rather than any uniform brilliance. For instance although most critics & readers are most impressed with the two striking images, namely, the arch of experience & the unforgettable comparison between the insatiability of the human soul in its thirst for knowledge & experience to a shining star, or the pursuit of the same by a divine being.

experience
knowledge

*2.
impossibility
of satisfying

* 1. urging to action

* 2. timidity

* 3. chief prince of the Greeks

* 4. extreme old age

* 5. selfish pursuit of pleasure

Telemachus responsible

from Ulysses's mouth line ⁽²⁴⁾ _{ant} snowflakes, his distress are swayed off their feet, & they instantly forget what he looks like. It is Ulysses's idealism & his skill at oratory that people are most impressed with. The Victorian hero, in spite of his moving words, and his exhortations seems unwilling to offend or to antagonise. (creating animus)

At best, Ulysses's attitude in T's poem, may be described as an attempt to damn with faint praise. This new timorousness & spirit of accommodation hardly accords with the image of the fiery orator who convinced the mutinous Greek soldiers outside the walls of Troy, to persist with Agamemnon, to slay & fight the Trojans. An extension of this view on the other, more ironical side might also end up by accusing Ulysses of a senile delinquency and an irresponsible hedonism.

Telemachus like Octavianus Caesar, is a representative of a newer and more responsible order, that must inherit the throne when it is abrogated by inefficient, senile & delinquent souls like Ulysses. And U. himself, it is often suspected is well aware

another
disciple
of Milton
Shelley in
his
Prometheus
Unbound
suffers
from the
same
drawback

is visualised. ⁽¹²⁾ Elsewhere in ⁽²⁵⁾ the
poem too, large parts seem to be
modelled upon the exclusively
sonorous effects, soot after by
Milton in his ^{physically} impaired condition.
However it may also be argued
that U. is an epic fragment
rather than an epic proper. T's
aim is to evoke a mood and
create an atm., rather than to
tell a story. Undoubtedly, therefore,
it does not have the excitement
of the narrative, that we are
accustomed to in the epic. No
wonder then, that Eliot should
find Ulysses "static" &
"elegiac" in mood, in comparison
with the ~~twenty~~ xxvith canto of
Dante's Inferno; which he
finds "moving" and "exciting".
Incidentally, in this connection,
it would not be unwise to
point out that T. was never
quite successful in pilch
the banding of the iambic
pentameter, or even any sort of
epic material. The Princess &
DuRoi may be exception (the
latter is not an epic), but words
like Monte D'Arthur & his idylls
of the King, which are in all

#1.
Body of
words
established
with genuinity
by the
author.

lesser place (M) in T's canon.

[Faint, mostly illegible handwritten text follows, covering the majority of the page. The text appears to be a list or a series of entries, possibly related to the 'lesser place' mentioned in the header.]

