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The Concept of Love in Auden's Poetry: A Modernistic Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the treatment of love in the poetry of W.H. Auden in the context of modernism. The texts examined in this research are As I Walked Out One Evening and O Tell Me the Truth About Love. The findings reveal that Auden challenges and problematizes notions of love depicted in normative and romanticized understandings of love as stable, enduring, and unaffected by time and human limitations. Using a qualitative textual analysis approach, this study shows how Auden uses irony, humor, and everyday language, to highlight the inconsistencies between the expectations that are set up by the idealized beauty and nature of love and the reality where love exists. The findings show that As I Walked Out One Evening reveals the inevitability of time eroding youthful promises, whereas O Tell Me the Truth About Love reveals love's indefinite and elusive qualities through jocular and ironic proclamations. Each of the poems represent modernist characteristics of modernism as the poems encapsulate the ways in which modernism is characterized by fragmentation, skepticism, and the rejection of objective norms and certainties. The modernist characteristics we can observe from Auden's construction of love is his snarky redefinition of love as imperfect, but indeed profound. Therefore, Auden captures modernist anxiety while providing a realist account that resonates with the reader today.

Keywords: *W.H. Auden, Modernism, Love*

INTRODUCTION

W.H. Auden

Wystan Hugh Auden is a famous English poet of the 20th century who was born in 1907 at York in England and later became a citizen of the United States in 1946. His work represents intellectual understanding and emotional connections which reveals that he was not only a poet, but also a thinker, a questioner and one who was so aware of the issues of his era (**Boly, 2007**). He appeared as a writer in the 1920s and 1930s which was the time of uncertainty and social changes but placed himself as an impressive poet.

Modernism

Modernism was a movement of social change and intellectual development which appeared at the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th centuries. It was influenced by the revolutionary changes in industrialization, urbanization and other major historic events like World War I. This time period saw the rejection and criticism of conventional concepts and an effort to redefine humanity's place in an era of rapidly changing world (**Eysteinsson, 1990; Habermas, 1990**).

Concept of Love and Modernism

Love is an aspect of life that has captured the attention of people and that is why many tried to understand and express its beauty. They have attempted to define it in different dimensions and each one of them holds a different aspect of human life. Sigmund Freud viewed love as a result of the perverse infantile sexuality that was poly, or, in other terms, development issues and its correlation with human desire (**Lyon, 1986**). Likewise, Havelock Ellis explains love as a combination of sex and friendship and links it with both physical and emotional dimensions (**Marshall, 2011**). Dorothy Tennov published the work on the phenomenon of limerence which explains the intense feelings that come in the very beginning of falling in love and this concept associated with the state of mind of romantic attraction. (**Marshall, 2007**).

Other aspects of love depicted by modernists tell us that it is neither a permanent nor a perfect experience. It changes, struggles, fails and sometimes suffers. These literary experiences confirm that in reality love is emotionally chaotic. Modernism does not give straightforward answers and this is why it asks us to take a closer look at love, not only as a dream but as an experience, as a sequence of contradictions and vulnerability, as the real thing.

Objectives

This study has the following objectives to achieve:

- To examine the concept of love in W.H. Auden's poetry through the lens of Modernism.
- To explore the change that occurred in the concept of love over the years.

Research Questions

Q1. What is the concept of love in W.H. Auden's poetry, as observed through modernist lens?

Q2. What change occurred in the concept of love with the passage of time?

Statement of the Problem

W.H. Auden is an important modern poet. His poetry challenges the traditional and romanticized version of love, which is a prominent characteristic of modernism. The theme of love is very dominant in his poetry, despite being dominant; the studies show that there is a limited exploration of it. This lack of exploration can prevent us from understanding the concept of love with a modernistic lens in Auden's Poetry. This study examines the concept of love within the framework of modernism and its evolution with the passage of time.

Significance of the Study

The value of this research can be measured in the ways that it contributes to a greater understanding of love, as seen through a modern lens in literary debates. It explores Auden's characteristics at his most individual when he writes of love, and it opens new perspectives for readers through which to view the poet. By the same token, Auden paints a picture of love that is distinct and complex from an oversimplified notion of love.

This piece is still relevant to modern day society. Auden tells people that love does not come as an ideal feeling: it is always followed by flaws in bonding and relation. The representation of love in his work is raw and that makes you question the conventional view on love under which you have lived so far. By re-imagining love as a moving target, Auden takes us into the building blocks of the phenomenon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

W.H.Auden

Peter Porter viewed Auden as the greatest English poet of the century and probably the last Englishman who dominated global literature (**Porter, n.d**). Auden's literary career started in the 1920s and 1930s. He was greatly inspired by T.S. Eliot and Thomas Hardy which shaped his thoughts for poetry (**Porter, 2007**).

As I Walked Out One Evening

Fleissner finds Auden's As I Walked Out One Evening as a clash between the promises of love and the continuous flow of time. The conversation between love and time highlights the temporary nature of human desires and emotion, and a harsh reminder of time and end of life (**Fleissner, 2005**).

O Tell Me The Truth About Love

Giussani (n.d.) highlights the musicality of O Tell Me the Truth About Love. Auden uses a rhythm similar to the one found in traditional ballads. The poem's musical quality created through its rhythm and rhyme strengthen its message about love. He mixes humor with a serious analysis of human feelings. Auden's use of poetic techniques such as repetition and different stanza lengths generate a lyrical effect that enhances the poem's clarity and emotional impact **(Giussani, 2020).**

The Concept of Love

Philosophers have long debated the nature of love. Plato also could not stop himself from commenting on it, he introduced the idea of Platonic love in *The Symposium*. Platonic love means the form of love that surpasses physical attraction and aims towards ideal and lasting beauty (Plato, trans. 1993). Aristotle viewed love (phila) as a form of noble friendship where both individuals aim for the good of the others. These historical concepts laid the groundwork for the modern debates about love's nature (**Singer, 1984**).

Traditional Love vs. Modern Love

The traditional concept of love commonly promotes self-sacrifice, commitment and responsibilities. This conventional love notion is taken from classical ideology and religious values. Plato explored eros (love) in classical Greece as a strong desire for beauty and truth. Such kind of love evolves from material attraction to divine connection (Plato, trans. 1993). Similarly another philosopher, Aristotle, saw love as a solid moral bond between individuals of noble character which emphasizes the idea of faithfulness and shared respect for each other **(Singer, 1984).**

In contrast, present day love is marked by emotional communication, individual independence and mutual satisfaction. Giddens (1992) presented the idea of “confluent love”. This kind of love emphasizes adjustability and open emotional interaction, which is very different from traditional love. Modern love is dependent on mutual satisfaction and lasts only as long as both partners feel fulfilled **(Giddens,1992)**.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the techniques and methods applied while conducting this analysis. This portion explains the process of research and how it was designed and what tools were utilized to investigate the central idea such as the notion of love in W.H. Auden's poetry. This particular study focuses on W.H. Auden's couple of poems named As I Walked Out One Evening and O Tell Me The Truth About Love. The mentioned two poems are chosen due to their mutual contribution towards Auden's view of love. He combines romantic ideas with a deeper understanding of time and the reality of human nature. The method selected for this research is not random but chosen carefully to keep this research academically relevant and present a deep understanding of how love is presented in Auden's poetry in the modern context.

Research Design

Qualitative study is an approach applied to examine and understand practical challenges more thoroughly (**Moser & Korstjens, 2017**). Qualitative research analyzes human perspectives and opinions to understand the process and reason behind the specific issues. It enables researchers to develop concepts or theories that can later be verified through quantitative techniques. This type of research has a potential to stand independently or combined with numerical statistical figures (**Tenny, Brannan, & Brannan, 2022**). On the other hand, quantitative study is a systematic technique used to gather and examine numerical information to understand relationships, connections and patterns (**Bhandari, 2021**). This type of technique is commonly applied when scholars need to verify a hypothesis and formulate predictions. It depends on systematic methods like interviews, experiments and numerical analysis to ensure precision and impartiality (**Creswell & Creswell, 2018**).

This study follows a qualitative research design which is widely preferable in literary analysis. Simply we can define qualitative research as being about understanding meaning rather than measuring numbers. Since this research is involved with abstract ideas like love and emotions, using qualitative design makes sense. A qualitative approach gives freedom to researchers to not just focus on what is said but how it has been presented to convey a specific idea. Poetry often possesses hidden meanings and messages, qualitative design helps uncover it. Literature, specifically poetry, is highly subjective, it can have multiple interpretations, in such cases a qualitative approach is best because it allows individual perspectives.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the principles of modernist literary theory which is highly relevant while studying Auden's poetry. Modernism as a literary movement often explores complex themes like disillusionment and instability of human emotions and challenges the traditional values. In the case of Auden, it can be observed clearly how he questions the idealized concept of love and tries to present a realistic view in an ironic way. This study focuses on uncovering the Auden treatment of love by using modernist lenses and how it reflects the changing values of the 20th century. This framework also explores the tension between human desires and the passage of time. It helps not only what the poems say but also explores the larger context of literary change.

Data Collection

In scholarly research, information is generally categorized into two fundamental types: primary data and secondary data. Primary data refers to information that is gathered directly by the researchers for a particular aim. Primary data may involve personal interviews, experiments and observations (**Kabir, 2016**). Since it is collected directly from the original source, primary data is more precise and relevant to the specific study .On the other hand, secondary data is information that has already been gathered and published by someone else. Secondary data includes books, research papers, reports and online databases (**Johnston, 2017**).

Since it is a literary study, the main source of data is the text itself which are Auden's two poems: As I Walked Out One Evening and O Tell Me the Truth About Love. These poems are chosen based on their relevance to the concept of love in modernist poetry. The process of collecting data involved a careful reading of these texts. Secondary data was also collected from books, journal articles and critical essays that discuss Auden's work. These sources provide help in explanations made during analysis. Websites such as JSTOR, Google Scholar and university libraries were used to access authentic academic material.

Methods of Analysis

An approach applied for examining which is a typical method for scholarly research is known as textual analysis. Textual Analysis includes phrase by phrase study of the poems to understand its meanings, recognize its themes, and understand the approach behind words to convey complicated ideas. The main emphasis is on recognizing the way Auden depicts love and rather than presenting it as just a passionate feeling but a concept influenced by time and human imperfection. Particular priority is given to the form and themes of the poems and examine how these components support or question the modernist ideas such as ambiguity and uncertainty.

Ethical Considerations

The present study does not involve personal communication with individuals, however moral principles were consistently maintained throughout the process. All the sources were correctly quoted to prevent plagiarism and ensure authenticity. Other scholar's ideas and analysis were acknowledged. The poems were approached without any personal bias and efforts were made to present a fair and balanced analysis.

Conclusion

In short this chapter highlights the techniques used to conduct this research. The present study follows a qualitative approach with the theoretical framework of modernism. Primary data is the text itself while secondary data is retrieved from articles, essays and books. Textual analysis method is used to explore its love related themes. Ethical standards are maintained to avoid plagiarism.

ANALYSIS

Introduction to the Analysis Chapter

This section of the study takes a close look at how Auden explores the idea of love within his poetry. It concentrates particularly on two of his highly famous works: *As I Walked Out One Evening* and *O Tell Me the Truth About Love*. Both poems offer unique but interrelated perspectives about love which explores emotional depths and harsh truths commonly challenges unrealistic concepts. Within this chapter, the poems are analyzed thoroughly to recognize how Auden expresses the feelings and cognitive aspect of love and that too under the framework of modernism.

W.H. Auden, being a modernist writer lived throughout the unstable period of the early and middle of the 20th century. Auden poetry reflects unpredictability and changing values of his age. Love, which is an eternal and universal subject, is not presented as something simple and blissful. On the other hand, love is shown as something powerful but not complete and perfect—it contrasts with the passage of time and human weaknesses. This chapter intends to explore these aspects of love and additionally looks in what way Auden uses structure along with language to show both its beauty and its shortcomings.

Through conducting a detailed analysis of the poems and supported by secondary sources and academic interpretations, the present study explores the paradoxes present in Auden's depiction of love. The concentration of the study is not simply the nature of love but additionally what is not love by revealing the gap between idealistic expectations and actual reality. For example in As I Walked Out One Evening, Auden compares the idealistic words of lovers with the sound of clock. He warns the readers of time disintegration. In O Tell Me the Truth About Love, he addresses the theme using a humorous and ironic perspective.

This current chapter of the research aims to give a clear as well as thoughtful analysis of the poems. It focuses not just on what they say about love but also what way they say it. After studying closely at the poems and considering what other scholars have said, this section will show how Auden uses different poetic techniques to explore the deep emotions connected to love. Auden urges readers to think about what love means in their

personal lives, regardless of whether he is being kind or ironic. That is the thing that makes his poetry feel both timeless and personal.

Love in the Context of Modernist Literature

In order to truly understand in what way Auden shows love inside his poetry, it is important to understand the bigger picture of the Modernist movement. Modernism was a literary and intellectual movement which started in the early 1900s as a reaction to a fast-changing society due to new innovations, expansion of cities and decline in traditional beliefs. Authors and poets for example T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf, and W.H. Auden started to question conventional ideas in not only literature but also in society. The modernists searched for new ways to express the nature of modern life.

Within poetry, Modernist writers moved away from the popular ideas of earlier times which were based on romantic ideas and emotional overemphasis. Rather than describing love as perfect, timeless, or magical, they showed it as complex, uncertain, and shaped by both social and personal issues**.** This transformation can be clearly seen in Auden's poetry. He does not show love as a perfect or idealized experience. Rather than that, Auden's poems present the confusion and even the unusual or silly moments which can come with love in the modern world.

In the same way, O Tell Me the Truth About Love showcases a humorous and ironic style. The poem does not discuss love in a serious or sensitive way. Instead, it asks funny and unusual questions like, "***Does it look like a pair of pyjamas, Or the ham in a temperance hotel***?" With the mentioned lines, Auden appears to be suggesting that love is hard to fully explain or define. The poem gives us the idea that love is a combination of pleasure and silliness, and it is something where logic might not really work.

The thing that makes Auden's view of love truly modernist is that he does not provide clear or simple answers. He does not claim that love is an ideal solution for loneliness, however he is also shy to say that love is completely pointless. Instead, his perspective about love is very human-like, for example full of complex feelings, desires, doubts, and misunderstandings. Such type of complexity is a fundamental part of Modernist writing because it shows life as it is, real and complicated.

Additionally, the modern world shown in Auden's poems is one where old ethical principles have lost their value and influence. There exists no clear truth or ideal to depend on because in modern times love is not influenced by religion or customs but by each individual's unstable and confusing experiences. In this way, Auden's poems show the Modernist idea of a world which seems broken, unstable, and full of such individuals who are trying to find meaning in the middle of all these changes.

To summarize this section, Auden's perspective of love is evidently influenced by Modernist ideology. His poems present love as something which is not perfect or easy to understand. Rather than it is full of flaws, humour, and confusion. Such an authentic and realistic approach makes his poetry feel real and meaningful, even for readers today.

Close Reading of "As I Walked Out One Evening"

The poem As I Walked Out One Evening written by W.H. Auden can be seen as thought provoking. It explores the themes of love, human limitations, and time's passage. In this part, detailed analysis will take place to understand the way Auden uses to present love and its comparison with the time limitations and actual reality.

The poem starts with the description of a scene which is calm and peaceful:

" As I walked out one evening,
Walking down Bristol Street,
The crowds upon the pavement
Were fields of harvest wheat."

In the first stanza, Auden compares people of the city with a field of wheat. Here Auden uses a metaphor and compares the crowd with crops which symbolizes that people are now ready to diminish just like wheat is harvested after a specific time period. He reminds people that they have very limited time and hints that they are very close to death. In these lines Auden mixes rural life with the urban which represents a modernist approach where traditional values are set within the new world. The calm and peaceful start creates a romantic feeling, however this atmosphere suddenly changes as the tone and point of view shift.

While near the river, the speaker hears a lover singing;

" And down by the brimming river
I heard a lover sing
Under an arch of the railway:
'Love has no ending."

This stanza is very important for understanding the way Auden uses to show love in the modern world. The lover sings and claims that love has no ending which is a traditional concept of love. However, here the interesting thing is the setting where the lover's voice can be heard: a railway arch. It is not a beautiful garden or calm village side but an industrial space in the middle of the city. Here is a contrast between the lover's message and setting, it symbolizes the tension between traditional ideas and reality of modern life respectively.

When the speaker notices the voice of lover from a window while singing, we are introduced to a voice which is full romantic idealism:

"I'll love you, dear, I'll love you
Till China and Africa meet,
And the river jumps over the mountain
And the salmon sing in the street."

The mentioned verses are loaded with exaggerated commitments that could never really happen. These lines seem like the kind of words spoken in traditional love poems. However, Auden uses another character and silly images (like salmon singing in the street) which reveals that he does not believe in these promises and it is not his point of view. Instead, he mocks the impractical and idealistic approach of the people. Such kind of emotional love is far away from reality.

Here the poem introduces the voice of a clock which interrupts the song of a lover and it shifts the poem's narrative from idealistic to realistic. The clock is a symbol of time's passage and its control on human existence.

"O let not Time deceive you,
You cannot conquer Time."

This transition from ideal to real compels the reader to the actual world and moves them away from emotional dependency. Time is presented as an ultimate reality from which not a single individual can escape even after applying their extreme power. Love is also helpless before time, its intensity and force are in vain. Auden is of the opinion that time has the ability to change anything because attraction disappears, relationships shift

based on their priority, however it does not affect flow of life because it does not care for people's emotions. Here Auden raises questions about the earlier promises made by lovers and suggests that time is not something which we can overcome nor love or emotions regardless of how exceptional it appears.

Auden then deepens the philosophical tone of the poem:

"In headaches and in worry
Vaguely life leaks away,
And Time will have his fancy
To-morrow or to-day."

In this stanza Auden continuously informs us about the reality of time and how it slips away from people's hands and remains unnoticed. It even flows like a fluid during anxiety and depression. At one point time might come and decide to take your life without any warning because it does not follow any rule, it acts according to its own desire. Love which was once thought to be eternal can also become the victim of time. Auden is of the opinion that love, which is an abstract concept, can not survive against time like other materialistic things. Its intensity is of no help when it comes to stopping the passage of time. He questions the traditional concept of love which is based on permanence and reminds us the uncertainty and momentary nature of everything because of limited time, and this uncertainty is a modernist concept.

Again, the poem ends with a gentle return to the setting of the beginning:

"It was late, late in the evening,
The lovers they were gone;
The clocks had ceased their chiming,
And the deep river ran on."

This stanza is important for understanding the reality of modern love. All the lovers with their promises have now disappeared because they could not stand before time. It is not late in the day but late in their lives and they have forgotten their dreams. Their love which was once loud and emotional, now turned out momentary. Throughout the poem the clock represented reality and it warned about time's passage and death. In this stanza, Auden provides a modern perspective that time and death are the realities of life which we cannot escape. Despite all the changes life still goes on like a river and it has no influence of emotions. It does not stop for lovers, pain or death. Here, Auden again questions the traditional concept of love which is based on eternity, he suggests that love is also a temporary experience which exists, disappears and life continues.

DISCUSSION

In the beginning, the poem introduces a lover's voice and idealistic promises. The kind of love the lover is talking about is traditional love. Traditional love is something unharmed by time and space. However Auden does not let this dream last long and the clock enters to interrupt the past notion of love. Time is a harsh reality and it influences almost everything, so there is no exception for love as well. In such a way it challenges the unrealistic concept of love that it lasts forever. Modern love exists inside the power of time, not outside. Intensity of feelings does not matter for time, because ultimately time can change it. It is purely a modernist idea that everything is temporary, nothing stays forever. Auden also says that life is not like a fairy tale and it is not always a smooth journey. Life's problems, anxiety and depression slowly drain the beauty of life. Love can help upto some extent but it is not a permanent solution in modern times. This poem can also be seen as a conversation between idealism and realism. Auden does not deny the importance of love in individual lives but provides its way of existence in life. He suggests that love is no doubt a beautiful feeling but it is not beyond the power of time, there should be a realistic view about it. In short, Auden has presented love within the modernist limitations, without exaggerating it like in traditional concepts.

Close Reading of "O Tell Me the Truth About Love"

The poem O Tell Me the Truth About Love written by W.H. Auden asks some unusual questions about the nature of love. Auden tries to understand what love really is. The poem is written in comical tone but beneath its humour there lies seriousness and curiosity about emotions. Auden presents his own point of view about love by asking questions about it. From the analysis of the different stanzas, we can find that the Auden concept of love is mysterious and hard to define which is very close to the modern concept of love where nothing is clear and simple as it seems.

Right from the beginning, the poem takes on love in both serious and ironical style:

"Some say love's a little boy,
And some say it's a bird,
Some say it makes the world go round,
And some say that's absurd."

In the first line Auden compares love with a child which symbolizes purity and unpredictability. Then he compares it with a bird which is beautiful but too hard to catch. He also says that some people are of the opinion that love is the centre of human existence. However, in the last line of the stanza, he challenges the ideal view by saying that not all people find love fascinating but consider it as useless. Auden suggests that love means different things to different people and that is the reason why he is not ready to define love. He shows through his poems that love is a personal and confusing human experience, it is not a clear and simple or ideal concept like it was in traditional romantic poetry. Modern Love is where emotions are complex and certainty is very hard to find. That is why some subjects like love remain a mystery. This interpretation reflects the core idea of Modernism: ambiguity and fragmentation.

As the poem moves on, the questions become more extreme and strange:

"Will it knock on my door in the morning,
Or tread in the night on the stair?
Will it come like a change in the weather?
Will its greeting be courteous or bare?"

In the start of the stanza, Auden imagines love as a stranger or visitor who can visit in the morning. The morning suggests a fresh and new beginning of love and symbolizes the presence of love in daily experiences. The poem again raises the question that love might come unexpectedly at night. It compares love with unpredictable weather which suggests that love is something uncontrollable. The last line is about the manner of love whether it treats people gently or harshly, here again, is the sign of uncertainty. Like the whole poem, this stanza also increases the curiosity in the reader's mind and suggests that love has no fixed meaning, it might be sudden or predictable, comforting or disturbing. Auden describes what forms love can take. This is far different from traditional poetry because there is a stability of emotions which is unlikely in modern poetry. This also shows that love is not always polite or perfect but sometimes it leads us to discomfort and pain, which is a modernist perspective.

Further stanzas show love in even stranger ways:

"Will it alter the shape of my face?
Does it have to do with age?
Is it prone to change as the moon is,
Or fix'd as a rock or a cage?"

The poet inquires whether love has the ability to affect a person's appearance and mood. He asks whether love cares about our age, it suggests that love might be timeless or something fades away with the passage of time. Then it compares love with the moon which is a symbol of change; new, crescent, half and full. It describes the inconsistent nature of love, sometimes bright and sometimes barely there. At one point the poet shifts his focus and suggests that love might be something permanent and strong like a rock or it might prove like a cage that limits a person's freedom. These confusing examples create a sense of doubts and raise questions about what love really is. It becomes clear that love is not just an emotional feeling but something beyond that affects both the body and the mind. It can shape the way we see ourselves and even change who we are. Auden, like other modern poets, focuses on the complicated side of love rather than showing it perfect and beautiful.

Auden continues asking whether love can be trusted, where it comes from, and what it looks like:

"Is it easy to find or hidden?
Is it wise or foolish and wild?
Does it scream like a hawk in the forest,
Or whisper soft as a child?"

The stanza again starts with a question whether love is simple or mysterious and hard to discover, there is an uncertainty and suggests that love is not always clear and predictable. Again there is a contrast in how love looks in reality whether a mature connection or a wild and irrational force that takes over a person. Auden suggests that love can be both having a commanding scream like a hawk or gentle innocent voice of a child. The child and hawk represent opposite ideas, the hawk is dominant and the child is innocent. His curiousity about love is endless and continuesly asks questions without providing any conclusion about it, this highlights the struggle in defining the nature of love. In the modern world nothing is clear and there are paradoxes everywhere.

The final stanza, as in many of Auden's poems, leaves the question unresolved:

"When I asked the man next-door,
(Who looked as if he knew)
His wife came out and banged the door —
And something frightened the cat away."

DISCUSSION

The poem O Tell Me the Truth About Love is a deep philosophical In the last stanza, Auden is still trying to find the answer about love, he even visited common people for this purpose. It suggests that people who seem normal and familiar might have knowledge about this deep question. This man appeared as if he knew the answer but before answering it his wife interrupted it. It symbolizes that the people who have the possible knowledge about love are distracted by daily life problems. This brings love from an ideal world to a real and imperfect world. It also suggests that love disappears with passage of time as it is visible in the behavior of this couple. This shows Auden's critical approach towards conventional love. Modernists are of the opinion that love can be suppressed under daily life responsibility and problems.

poem that raised some basic questions about love. Auden uses comic style to inquire these uncertain questions instead of asking it in a romantic way. The central modern idea shown in this poem is that love has no fixed meaning. In the modern world love is no longer pure because it is under the influence of personal doubts and social changes. People now live in a place where truths are hard to find, where traditional roles have faded and personal identities are prefered over society. In such a situation love feels less like a path more like a maze where anyone can easily be lost. Unlike romantic poets who have always been ready to praise love,

Auden intrudesces doubts and suspicion. His questioning approach is key to modernist thinking, where nothing is taken easy.

Comparison Between the Two Poems

Comparison of "As I Walked Out One Evening" and " Tell Me the Truth About Love" can give us the bigger picture of love which Auden is trying to convey. It provides different ways and understanding by dealing with the same subject. Behind these differences both poems share a modernist perspective which is a fragmented and skeptical view of love.

As *I Walked Out One Evening* is a serious and tragic poem. The poem begins with a beautiful and romantic scene with lovers in the city. But soon the mood changes when the clock enters and interrupts everything with its voice. The clock represents time's passage and mortality. This shift from an ideal world to a real life is modern technique and reveals how love in reality is dependent on time which is beyond anyone's control.

On the other hand, O Tell Me the Truth About Love is curious and ironic in tone. In this poem Auden asks very silly and childlike questions about love. There is a humour and imagination behind these questions in the way love is compared to birds, weathers and even clothes. Beneath this comic tone there lies a deep philosophical aspect, which promotes skepticism where everything is questioned. Love remains a mystery and Auden fails to find a satisfying answer and leaves it unsolved.

The structure As I Walked Out One Evening is traditional. It tells us a story by narrating that a speaker walks through the city, suddenly hears lovers' voices and they are making grand promises meanwhile time also enters. This narrative structure allows Auden to symbolize tension between idealistic expectations and actual reality. This shift from hopes to heartbreaking scenes in the end shows that love sometimes collapses under the real world pressure situations.

O Tell Me the Truth About Love's structure is fragmented and it is not a single story. Instead it is a series of questions and comparisons about love. This shows the real world connection of love and how it is difficult to define because of its multifaceted nature. In this poem, Auden does not provide any conclusion about love but presents it more complex by connecting it with different things due to its inquiry style.

Both poems question the traditional concept of love which is love being timeless, pure and all powerful. As I Walked Out One Evening presents time as an ultimate destroyer. The poem declines the idea of sincerity and intensity in emotions by suggesting that it cannot survive against time, and all the promises made by lovers are of temporary nature. Similarly, O Tell Me the Truth About Love questions the nature of love. It suggests that everything is uncertain and questionable, unlike the concept found in traditional love where it has a fixed meaning and a noble phenomenon.

Thematic Exploration: Love and Time in Auden's Poetry

W.H. Auden does not consider love and time two separate forces but intertwined in each other. In the conventional concept love was ahead of time because it could triumph over time as we saw at the beginning of poem As I Walked Out One Evening in the shape of lover's promises. However soon time shatters its dream that no love, no matter how strong it is, can not avoid decay and death. O Tell Me the Truth About Love does not address the relationship between love and time directly but it questions the traditional concept of love. It raises concerns about why love is so hard to define, and why it feels different at different times. In both poems Auden challenges the unrealistic concepts about love.

In As I Walked Out One Evening, Auden presents contrasts between romantic idealism and reality of time. Poem begins by the speaker walking in the streets then lover's voice is introduced with grand promises.

Initially the lover is hopeful that they can defeat time, death and other natural elements. But Auden does not let them fulfill their dream and reminds them of the passage of time which is unstoppable. All these promises and dreams are helpless before the power of time. At the end of the poem, the lovers which were once very dedicated are gone, the clocks are stopped, and the river is still flowing as before. All these images suggest that everything changes with the passage of time but the river which represents time still flows, it does not care about love or emotions.

Unlike As I Walked Out One Evening, the poem O Tell Me the Truth About Love takes a different perspective about love. Here Auden shows his deep concern about the nature of love and he is curious about it. In this poem he asks a series of questions and he is trying to understand what love really is but does not provide any answer to it. He suggests that the meaning of love can change and it depends on who you are and what your personal experiences are. Auden says that love is not something which we can easily understand, it is more complex than we think. So in this way a single definition of love is difficult because of its multifaceted nature. The more important thing is not that the speaker gets a clear answer but increases the uncertainty while trying to know the real nature of love and love remains a mystery.

Auden's both poems are involved in challenging the traditional idea of love. Instead of idealizing love, his presentation of love feels closer to real life and modern experiences. In As I Walked Out One Evening, love becomes a struggle between the hope of love and reality of time. On the other hand, O Tell Me the Truth About presents the hurdles and confusion in defining love. These both approaches are very unlike conventional notions about love which is based on eternity and simplicity.

Modern era has a great influence over the Auden's treatment of love where love is no longer perfect and eternal. Instead, love, like other emotions, is shaped by daily life responsibilities and uncertainties. In traditional poetry love often triumphs over time but it is not the case in modern times. Modern poetry presents love as it is neither less nor more, with all the imperfections related to it.

Such a strong connection of love with time suggests that love is no more perfect and timeless. Love is no longer above the world but a part of the world and exposed to decay and uncertainty. Auden does not give any false hope but he tries to convey love with all the imperfections and its struggle against time.

Modernist Characteristics in Auden's Treatment of Love

The selected poems of Auden fits strongly within the tradition of modern literature, specifically the way he presents. Modernism was a literary and intellectual movement that emerged in the 20th century which influenced almost everything including writers' thoughts about human emotions. It was an era of change in the old traditions, industrialization and wars. Writers including poets raise questions about the old traditional beliefs and they also reject the simple and definable nature of love, this rejection is evident in Auden poetry. Through his poetry Auden presents love as complex and complicated which is very close to the real aspect of love. Adaptation of reality and honesty in his poetry enabled Auden to stand as a modern writer .

Rejection of Idealized Love

Modern literature does not accept perfectionism or timelessness, it tries to stay as close to reality as possible. Similarly we have Auden poetry which reflects the same characteristics as Modern literature. His poetry refuses to present love as a perfect phenomenon which is an idealistic view, instead he presents it with all the realities and imperfections. As I Walked Out One Evening starts with lovers' grand promises in the voice of

lovers but soon they are exposed to the reality of time which no one can stop. Similarly, O Tell Me the Truth About Love inquire such basic questions about love which promotes the uncertain and unstable nature of it. Because Auden does not find any conclusion about love and it suggests that love is something undefinable. These all are very unlike the conventional concept of love where love is perfect, noble and eternal. and Auden rejects all these old concepts and present love as imperfect and uncertain.

Uncertainty and Ambiguity

Modern writers highly believe in the statement that reality is subjective, meaning one person might see things differently from others, so conclusion about anything is impossible. Due to this reason they do not provide any clear answer about anything and this is exactly what Auden does in his poetry. He does not define what love is but presents different aspects and possibilities of its existence and lets its readers decide. He, in O Tell Me the Truth About Love raises many questions about the reality of love but does not provide any single answer which creates uncertainty and doubt.

Fragmentation and Contrasting Voices

Traditional writers narrate a single story with a single voice however the case becomes different in modern literature. Modern literature deviates from a single voice to many different voices and perspectives. As I Walked Out One Evening uses three different voices i.e, the narrator who is walking in the streets of city, the lovers with grand promises and the clock which represents time. These three voices convey three different points of view which create different layers of complexity. Similarly, O Tell Me the Truth About Love presents love in fragmented form. It is a modern idea that this world is multidimensional and it can not be explained in a single perspective.

Use of Ordinary Language and Realism

Traditional poetry uses highly complex language to describe love and its nature. But modern poetry prefers simple and direct language which is in daily usage. Auden also follows modern trends by using a language which is plain and easily understandable. In O Tell Me the Truth About Love, he uses daily life examples and vocabulary like weather, headache, and a frightened cat which is very relatable to our real lives. This relation of the language with the real world makes it modern literature, because in modernism writers seek reality so everyone can relate it with their experiences.

Critique of Social Norms and Expectations

It is a fact that modernism is the result of reaction against traditional ideas and concepts. Traditional concepts are fixed and for a long time they remained unquestionable. But with the rise of modernism, this approach starts to change and modernism begins to question. They criticized society for being blind believers, and not raising their concerns about different ideas, not even about the nature of love. They criticized people for their expectations and their deviation from accepting reality.

Conclusion of the Section

Auden's poetry has all the characteristics of modern literature including its treatment of love. His poetry rejected the idealized notion of love which existed in the conventional concept. His poetry does not provide any clear answer about love which creates uncertainty and ambiguity. Other modern features like

fragmentation, distinct voices and the use of natural language can also be found in Auden's poetry. Other than these his poetry also criticizes social norms and values. In short Auden works, specifically these two poems can be categorized as modern literature.

Emotional Depth and Philosophical Themes in the Selected Poems

The combination of emotions and philosophical thoughts make Auden's poetry powerful. Auden does not just write about love but forces his readers to think and collect their own thoughts about it. Is love timeless and limitless or temporary and under human limitations? Such questions and in depth exploration of love give Auden's poetry a unique strength. Auden is honest about love, he presents both aspects of its beauty and flaws.

Exploring Inner Conflicts and Emotional Complexity

As I Walked Out One Evening is a conflict between emotions and the inevitable reality of time. Initially the lovers are full of hope and they make grand promises where love feels endless. But then the clock enters and warns them of time's passage that time is watching them from shadows. It suggests that nothing is permanent here and there is no exception for love as well so in this way love remains an uncertain phenomenon. Auden does not reject the importance of love but he is trying to find the answer to the question of how long love can survive against the pressure of time and circumstances.

Auden's approach for the treatment of love in O Tell Me the Truth About Love is ironic and skeptical. Instead of making declarations he asks some basic questions to create curiosity about the nature of love. These questions allow readers to think freely and try to find their own answer and describe what is basically love for them. Such a broader perspective about love suggests that love is not simple and fixed to define like other things in the world which are uncertain and of unstable nature. It leads to curiosity and confusion about love whether it is an understandable thing or will always remain a mystery.

Philosophical Views on Time and Love

Auden does not just write about love but also tries to explore the theme of time and human desires. Time is not just happening in the background in the poem As I Walked Out One Evening. It becomes a real and powerful force that can shape, limit and even destroy love. Our intensity of feelings are of no use because nothing can stop the passage of time. This idea challenges the traditional concept where love is eternal limitless. However, modern love is not safe from aging and decay and is exposed to all imperfections. Here love exists within the range of time not its outside because it has no such magical power to escape.

Though O Tell Me the Truth About Love is a humorous poem but still touches the philosophical aspect of love. After asking strange questions one after another makes love more complex and uncertain. Its complexity suggests that love is one of those experiences of human life which they can never fully understand. In the current scenario, it is the need of the time to understand that not everything can be explained through logic or reason. Love is also one of them no matter how hard we try to understand them.

Idealism Vs Realism

The struggle of what people hope love will be and what actually turns out to be, is discussed in Auden's selected poems. This tension between idealism and realism is discussed in the poem As I Walked Out One

Evening in the shape of lover's sweet promises the harsh reality of time. The lovers have a dream of such love which is perfect and untouched by time or time. But the clock interrupts and reminds us that time never stops and humans are far from perfect. Auden is of the opinion that we might desire for flawless love but the thing is that real love is not perfect.

The poem O Tell Me the Truth About Love is about the same inner conflict between what people expect love to be and what it actually turns out to be. In order to understand what true love is, Auden keeps asking questions to reach its core. But it does not matter how many questions he asks, there is no definite answer and may always remain just out of understanding. So modern love is not anymore easily understandable and definable but it is more complex in reality.

Emotional Honesty and Relatable Experiences

Auden's treatment of love is still influential because he makes it real and honest. He does not romanticize love but tries to present as it is with all negative and positive aspects. He warns love with the passage of time and unstable human behavior. He suggests that love can bring happiness but it also has the ability of introducing doubt and pain at the same time. Auden's view of love is very close to reality because he admits that love is very rarely easy and simple.

In the modern world people question traditional concepts including love in such cases Auden's honesty becomes more relevant in modern context. Auden does not pretend that he has an answer related to emotions or love but allows space for confusion and doubts. Auden encourages his reader to face uncertainty rather than hide from it, which is a modernist perspective.

Conclusion of the Section

Auden poetry goes beyond simple entertainment. It carries both philosophical depth and emotional complexity. His poetry encourages readers to think critically rather than accepting traditional ideas blindly. He does not settle for a simple or idealized concept of love but one which is real and honest. Auden's strength lies in the way he combines emotions and philosophy and lets his readers feel and question at the same time love. That is why his work still matters today and modern readers can easily connect with it.

CONCLUSION

The present chapter focuses on exploring the theme of love from a modern point of view in W.H. Auden's selected poems. Auden treatment of love is deeply based on human experience rather than presenting it as flawless and ideal. The conflict between love's promises and the passage of time suggests that love must face the reality of change. Auden poems create doubts and ambiguity to understand the nature of love.

Auden in his poem As I Walked Out One Evening set up a battle between the two powerful forces which is the dream of perfect love and the unchangeable reality of time. The lovers are very promised about their future of love but time has other plans for it which they can never avoid. The poem reminds us the time is always moving forward and it is not dependent on the intensity of love.

O Tell Me the Truth About Love is about the same modern love but it treats love from different angles. Unlike the other poem it does not tell a story but asks a series of questions which creates curiosity and doubts about love. It does not define love but presents it as a confusing and unpredictable phenomenon. According to this poem love does not always follow simple patterns and does not always need to be logical but it is a complex thing and that is how it should be presented.

Auden's both poems share similar modern views about love although they are far different from each other in style and structure. Both poems do not idealize love like in traditional concepts but present a modern perspective which is complex and uncertain. The rejection of idealized love is a clear sign of modernism in Auden's poetry.

Auden uses poetic techniques like symbolism, irony and specifically questions to create such poems which represent both emotions and mind. This approach of Auden allows readers to connect it with their personal experiences whether in pain, joy or heart break.

In short, Auden's take on love is purely modern, mature and honest. He is of the opinion that love is not perfect nor he tries to make it ideal but he presents it as a real and complicated human experience. He exposes his reader towards doubts and ambiguity to understand that love is not just a beautiful feeling but it is something that holds challenges as well. His poetry can shape people's lives and that is why it is still important and relatable.

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