
SONGS OF OURSELVES, VOLUME 1

Remember to support your ideas with details from the writing.

Read this poem and then answer the questions that follows it:

Report to Wordsworth

You should be here, Nature has need of you.
She has been laid waste. Smothered by the smog,
the flowers are mute, and the birds are few
in a sky slowing like a dying clock.
All hopes of Proteus rising from the sea **5**
have sunk; he is entombed in the waste
we dump. Triton's notes struggle to be free
his famous horns are choked, his eyes are dazed,
and Neptune lies helpless as a beached whale,
while insatiate man moves in for the kill. **10**
Poetry and piety have begun to fail,
as Nature's mighty heart is lying still.
O see the wound widening in the sky,
God is labouring to utter his last cry.

(Boey Kim Cheng)

1. Explore the ways in which Cheng makes *Report to Wordsworth* such a disturbing poem.

Point 1: earnest tone desiring Wordsworth's presence.

Evidence for Point 1: Line 1:

'You should be here, Nature has need of you'

Point 2: his personification of nature.

Evidence for Point 2: Lines 2 - 4:

'She has been laid waste. Smothered by the smog, the flowers are mute... in a sky slowing like a dying clock'

Point 3: his description of Proteus,

Evidence for Point 3: Lines 5 - 7:

'All hopes of Proteus rising from the sea/have sunk; he is entombed in the waste/we dump.'

Point 4: his description of Triton.

Evidence for Point 4: Lines 7 - 8:

'Triton's notes struggle to be free/his famous horns are choked, his eyes are dazed'

Point 5: his description of Neptune.

Evidence for Point 5: Lines 9 - 10:

'and Neptune lies helplessly as a beached whale,/while insatiate man moves in for the kill.'

Point 6: the failing state of poetry, piety and Nature.

Evidence for Point 6: Lines 11 - 12:

'Poetry and piety have begun to fail,/as Nature's mighty heart is lying still.'

Point 7: the destruction of the sky and impending death of God.

Evidence for Point 7: Lines 13 - 14:

'O see the wound widening in the sky,/God is labouring to utter his last cry'

Point 8: the structure.

Evidence for Point 6: Sonnet + has an ABAB CDCDEFEFGG rhyme scheme that uses broken into three rhyming quatrains and a couplet + is an iambic pentameter + enjambment + caesura.

Boey Kim Cheng (full name of poet) in his poem 'Report to Wordsworth' (title of poem) in which he laments and list the various destructive actions of humanity on nature (brief summary of the poem) makes the poem troubling by 1. his earnest tone desiring Wordsworth's presence, 2. his personification of nature, 3. his description of Proteus, 4. his description of Triton, 5. his description of Neptune, 6. the failing state of poetry, piety and Nature, 7. the destruction of the sky and impending death of God and 8. the structure.

Point, Evidence and Analysis of Evidence 1:

Point 1: earnest tone desiring Wordsworth's presence.

Evidence for Point 1: Line 1:

'You should be here, Nature has need of you'

Cheng **makes the poem disturbing** with his earnest tone demanding Wordsworth's presence. He says, 'You should be here' directly to the absent Wordsworth which is rather shocking because the reader knows that Wordsworth has been dead for a long time. Then, he tells him, 'Nature has need of you,' which is an apostrophe that is troubling because if only the dead Wordsworth can help personified Nature, possibly because of his love for it, means that the situation is a lost cause. Finally, his repetition of 'you' as the first and last word of the line emphasises his desperation for Wordsworth.

Point, Evidence and Analysis of Evidence 2:

Point 2: his personification of nature.

Evidence for Point 2: Lines 2 - 4:

'She has been laid waste. Smothered by the smog, the flowers are mute... in a sky slowing like a dying clock'

Furthermore, he makes the poem disturbing by his personification of Nature. 'She has been laid waste' presents Nature as a woman that has been totally ravaged and battered in the apocalyptic setting and left for dead while 'Smothered by the smog' suggests that the personified smog has its hands on Nature's nose stopping it from breathing, which is known to be a very personal way of killing someone. Finally, 'the flowers are mute' reveals that they are dumb and can no longer speak possibly because of shwhile 'in a

sky slowing like a dying clock' is a disturbing simile that reveals that the personified sky too is slowly dying.

Point, Evidence and Analysis of Evidence 3:

Point 3: his description of Proteus,

Evidence for Point 3: Lines 5 - 7:

'All hopes of Proteus rising from the sea/have sunk; he is entombed in the waste/we dump.'

In addition, the poet makes the poem disturbing by his description of Proteus. 'All hopes of Proteus rising from the sea/have sunk' is a disturbing revelation that suggests that the expectation that the Greek mythology god that controls the sea would come out of it has not happened because like a sunken ship, he cannot come out of the watery depths. Also, 'he is entombed in the waste/we dump' humanises Proteus and provides vivid visual imagery of him in a grave made of the trash that humans, the speaker included, has thrown into the sea which is very disturbing.

Point, Evidence and Analysis of Evidence 4:

Point 4: his description of Triton.

Evidence for Point 4: Lines 7 - 8:

'Triton's notes struggle to be free/his famous horns are choked, his eyes are dazed'

Additionally, he makes the poem disturbing by his description of Triton. The quote, 'Triton's notes struggle to be free' personifies the song that he plays with his instrument and suggests that a powerful force has wrapped itself around him and he is unable to break free. The detail 'his famous horns are choked' reveals that the musical instrument that he is best known for is blocked. Finally, 'his eyes are dazed' reveals that he cannot see clearly because he has been stunned possibly by an explosive that was dumped into the sea.

Point, Evidence and Analysis of Evidence 5:

Point 5: his description of Neptune.

Evidence for Point 5: Lines 9 - 10:

'and Neptune lies helplessly as a beached whale,/while insatiate man moves in for the kill.'

Also, he makes the poem disturbing by his description of Neptune. He tells, 'and Neptune lies helplessly as a beached whale,' which is a striking simile that likens the god Neptune's state to the largest sea creature that is lying helplessly on a beach. Meaning that it is only a matter of time before he will die without human help. Even more troubling is 'while insatiate man moves in for the kill' which is a shocking detail that reveals that greedy and heartless people are already approaching the helpless and weak Neptune to murder it possibly to divide among themselves.

Point, Evidence and Analysis of Evidence 6:

6. revealing the failing state of poetry, piety and Nature,

Point 6: the failing state of poetry, piety and Nature.

Evidence for Point 6: Lines 11 - 12:

'Poetry and piety have begun to fail,/as Nature's mighty heart is lying still.'

Furthermore, Cheng **makes the poem disturbing** by revelation about the failing state of poetry, piety and nature. He says, 'Poetry' which is an allusion to education, enlightenment and knowledge 'and piety' which is an allusion to the fear of God, love for nature and one's neighbours 'have begun to fail,' which suggests that the degree is no longer at a healthy level so people are more hostile and wicked and only look out for what they think they would benefit while 'as Nature's mighty heart is lying still' is a troubling detail that reveals that personified Nature is dead because her huge and welcoming heart is no longer beating.

Point, Evidence and Analysis of Evidence 7:

Point 7: the destruction of the sky and impending death of God.

Evidence for Point 7: Lines 13 - 14:

'O see the wound widening in the sky,/God is labouring to utter his last cry'

Point, Evidence and Analysis of Evidence 8:

Point 8: the structure.

Evidence for Point 6: Sonnet + has an ABABDCDEFEFEGG rhyme scheme that uses broken into three rhyming quatrains and a couplet + is an iambic pentameter + enjambment.

Finally, he **makes the poem disturbing** with the structure. The poem is a sonnet, seen in its fourteen lines with an ABABDCDEFEFEGG rhyme scheme which can be broken into three rhyming quatrains and a couplet which powerfully communicates the speaker's extremely sorrowful tone as he lists the many destructive actions of man. It is also an iambic pentameter seen in it have five metric feet of unstressed and followed by a stressed syllable which gives it a da dum sound. Finally, the poet uses enjambment multiple times in the poem seen in the flow of words from one line to the next without pause, which reveals his eagerness to reveals the consequences of man's actions on nature and society.

In conclusion/To conclude/All in all/ Cheng effectively exposes the troubling nature of the poem by his earnest tone desiring Wordsworth's presence, 2. his personification of nature, 3. his descriptions of Proteus, 4. Triton, 5. Neptune, and their precarious situations 6. the failing state of poetry, piety and Nature, 7. the destruction of the sky and impending death of God and 8. the structure.