**Alfred Tennyson's "Locksley Hall"**

**Summary**

Early one morning, a soldier asks his comrades to leave him at Locksley Hall, an estate on an eminence near the sea. In his youth, he spent many a night at the hall gazing out a window at stars, in particular those in the constellation Orion and in the Pleiades cluster. During the day, he often wandered the beach while thinking of the promises of the future.

.......“In the Spring,” the knight says, “a young man's fancy turns lightly to thoughts of love” (line 20). And so it was with him when he told his cousin Amy that “all the current of my being sets to thee” (line 24). And she told him, “I have loved thee long” (line 30). They spent many mornings on the moorland listening to the sounds of nature, and they passed many evenings by the sea watching the ships go by.

.......Now she is out of his life, for she was a “Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue.” She lowered herself and married a man unworthy of her. Consequently, the speaker says, her husband's “nature will have weight to drag thee down” (line 48). He will treat her little better than his dog or his horse. And she will have to be there to humor him in his moods. But “I had loved thee more than ever wife was loved” (line 64) says the speaker.

The speaker berates Amy for forsaking him, saying she apparently never truly loved him. And the day will come when her husband will die, but not before she has a child who will become the center of her attention. When her child grows, she will lecture it with a “hoard of maxims” (line 94) telling the child to be chary of her feelings (as Amy's own parents did). Such feelings could be dangerous.

"What is that which I should do?” (line 99), the speaker asks.

He would have been content to fall in battle to his enemies. Now, it would be wonderful if he could return to his days of youthful excitement, when he felt alive.

The soldier ponders for a moment about the world and the future, then hears the bugle call of his men coming for him and says, “I am shamed thro' all my nature to have loved so slight a thing” (line 148). He also says, “Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, match'd with mine, / Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—" (lines 151-152).

The soldier dreams of going to a far-off land in the Orient with no traders and no ships with European flags. There, he would wed a savage woman who would bear him “dusky” children (line 168) who could “whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows of the brooks” (line 171). But he relents and says he does not really prefer a rude and barbarous life.

He bids farewell to Locksley Hall, hoping that that a thunderbolt will strike it down.

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**Type of Work and Publication Year**

Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Locksley Hall" is a dramatic monologue centering on unrequited love. A dramatic monologue is a poem that presents a moment in which a narrator/speaker discusses a topic and, in so doing, reveals his personal feelings to a listener. Only the narrator talks—hence the term monologue, meaning "single (mono) discourse (logue)." During his discourse, the speaker intentionally or unintentionally reveals information about himself.  Edward Moxon published the poem in London in 1842 as part of a two-volume collection of Tennyson's verse.

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**Theme**

The theme of the poem is the bitterness of unrequited love. The speaker first recalls the happy times at Locksley Hall with Amy, the woman he loved. But after Amy left him, he became extremely bitter and angry. He heaps curses on her and the man she chose. He ends the poem by hoping that a storm destroys Locksley Hall.

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**Form**

1. End Rhyme

Tennyson wrote the poem entirely in couplets. A couplet consists of two successive lines with end rhyme. The type of end rhyme used throughout the poem is masculine rather than feminine. In masculine rhyme, only the final syllable of a line rhymes with the final syllable of another line. In feminine rhyme, the final two syllables of a line rhyme with the final two syllables of another line.

2. Internal Rhyme

Tennyson also included occasional internal rhyme in the poem, as in the following lines.

Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the West. (line 8)

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or snow (line 193)

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**Tone**

The poem begins with soulful nostalgia about a time in the speaker's life when he and his cousin Amy were in love. But in Line 39, the poem turns bitter and angry as the speaker reveals that Amy, bowing to the wishes of her parents, married another man. After ridiculing Amy and her husband sarcastically, the speaker turns his attention for a moment to the future and its promise:

I will turn that earlier page.

Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-Age! (lines 107-108)

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,

When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life (lines 109-110)

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would yield,

Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field (Lines 107-112)

His bitterness and sarcasm return in Lines 148-154.

I am shamed thro' all my nature to have loved so slight a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman's pleasure, woman's pain—

Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower brain:...................

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, match'd with mine,

Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, match'd with mine,

Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—

The poem ends when the speaker wishes a storm would destroy Locksley Hall.

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**Figures of Speech**

Following are examples of figures of speech in the poem.

1. Alliteration

When I clung to all the present for the promise that it closed (line 14)

Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be (line 16)

Many a morning on the moorland (line 35)

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung (line 41)

father's field (line 112)

dreary dawn (line 114)

Pilots of the purple twilight dropping down with costly bales (line 122)

world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm (line 125)

2. Anaphora

Example 1

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed;

When I clung to all the present for the promise that it closed:

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When I dipt into the future far as human eye could see (lines 13-15)

Example 2

In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast;

In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;

In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the burnish'd dove;

In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love (lines 17-20)

Example 3

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!

O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren shore! (lines 39-40)

Example 4

Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof-tree fall. (line 190)

3. Metaphor

storm of sighs (line 27)

Comparison of exhalations with a storm

Metaphor/Personification

Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his glowing hands (line 31)

Comparison of the love to a person who upturns and hour glass

Onomatopoeia

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honour feels,

And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's heels. (lines 105-106)

Simile

Many a night I saw the Pleiades, rising thro' the mellow shade,

Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid (lines 9-10)

Comparison of stars to fireflies

the centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed (line 13)

Comparison of centuries to land.

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**Tennyson's Prescience**

When Tennyson discusses the future in "Locksley Hall," he presents remarkable images of air travel and warplanes even though he wrote the poem in the 1830s. His vision in this regard is far clearer than the often-ambiguous prophecies of the French astrologer Nostradamus (1503-1566). Following are Tennyson's prescient observations.

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,

Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,

Pilots of the purple twilight dropping down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew

From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue. (lines 119-124)

Of course, Tennyson had no foreknowledge of aviation. He simply used his common sense to look ahead to what was likely to come about.

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**Revelations about the Speaker**

The poem expresses the speaker's extreme anger with Amy because of her decision to marry another man. This anger causes him to reveal that

1...He can be petty and sarcastic. (lines 48-52)

2...He believes women are inferior to men. (lines 151-152)

3...He harbors racial prejudice. (lines 173-178)

4...He is capricious. After considering moving to the Orient and marrying a native woman, he changes his mind a moment later, saying,

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,

Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day;

Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay. (lines 181-184)

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