

B. A. Part - I (English)

Subsidiary

Paper - I

Date

Page

Shailesh Ranjan
Asst. Professor
Dept. of English
Maharaja College, Ara

Look Stranger : Critical appreciation

The poem entitled 'Look Stranger' is one of the finest poems composed by W.H. Auden. Auden was a leading poet of the early twentieth century. His influence on English poetry is too strong to go unnoticed. Though he migrated to America yet he retained a strong sentimental feeling for England. The poet's early poetry bore a marxian stamp on it. His later poetry however, raised him to the stature of great poets. His strong sentimental attachment with English landscape finds a fitting expression in this lyric.

The poem depicts an objective picture of the seascape. On a certain occasion, the poet and his friend happen to come to the sea-coast. From there they can have a view of the large surrounding including the sea and the land. In the opening lines of the poem, the poet addresses his companion to witness the exquisitely lovely scene. They are standing on piece of land surrounded by the water of the sea. They can notice the rise and fall of waves. They can also listen to the music arising out of the commotion in the sea. The sound of the sea has been compared to a flowing river that may pass through

the channels of the ear's. The poet attracts the reader towards the natural beauty -

" And silent be,

That through the channels of the ear,

May wander like a river,

The swaying sound of the sea."

The poet asks his companion to enjoy the heavenly sight. The onlooker should stand silent and motionless on the sea beach. The music of the waves will go lazily twisting and turning through his ear like a river course. Further in the second stanza the poet asks his companion on the sea-coast to stop a while at the last point of the field touching the sea. The walls of the sea are white as chalk. The waves of the sea dash against the walls. Pebbles of the chalk fall in to and float on the sea but the wall stands undisturbed and unshaken. The sea bird is seen taking flights over the sea. Further, the poet describes the ships that he sees floating far off. Due to long distance, the ships look as small as seeds. The clouds that hang by the sky have their face reflected in the sea water. The whole scene has left a permanent print on the poet's mind. The clouds move about freely through out the summer.

Thus, W.H. Auden has

Page _____

beautifully presented the beauty of nature. There is Wordsworthian simplicity about this poem. Without much of rhetorical flourish the poet draws a beautiful picture of the English landscape. Through this poem, Auden seems to alive the romantic cult. The music produced by the waves has been compared to a wandering river. It passes in to channels of the ear. Such imagination increases the beauty of the poem. The description shows Auden's power of minute observation and his ability to express himself with precision. The lines are rich in alliteration and images are appropriate. The poem is full of images and scenes. Images like sea-waves, sea-birds, ships like seed, ~~etc~~ clouds hanging by the sky make a permanent impression on the poet's mind. The expression is free from strains. The simile "like floating seeds" suggests they are bearing new life. The alliteration and consonance of 'l' sounds (leaping, light, delight) and of the dental -t- and -d- sounds (light, delight discovers) in the second line, and the variation of long vowel sounds in "leaping" and "light", together with the repetition of "light", creates a quick dancing effect which mimics the reflection of sunlight off waves. The poem is written in three stanzas of seven lines each. The rhyme scheme of the first stanza is abcdcbd. The

Line lengths are varied effectively, to suggest changes in the movement of waves or in the duration of a sound or a feeling. Words are chosen properly to present the feelings of the poet and images are proper for the natural beauty.