

Consider *Ulysses* as a typical Victorian poem.

Ulysses is a typical Victorian poem. It has the main features of a Victorian poem, such as social consciousness (realism) vs. escapism, idealism, conflict between science and religion, love of nature. The Victorian age was one of energy and resolution. The people were drunk with the desire to enlarge the boundaries of knowledge to the farthest limit through scientific discoveries and inventions, to explore new lands through voyages and to extend the bounds of the British empire through annexation. The epoch-making discoveries of Charles Darwin and other scientists added to the people's curiosity about unexplored fields of knowledge. *Ulysses* is writ large with this social consciousness. *Ulysses* represents the energy and restless curiosity of the Victorians and their resolution to leave nothing unseen, unknown and unexplored. As Hales says, *Ulysses* embodies, "the modern passion for knowledge, for the exploration of its limitless fields, for the annexation of new kingdoms of science and thought."

Ulysses is not satisfied with the knowledge and experience he has gained, because

"all experience is an arch where thro'
Gleams that untravell'd world. Whose margin fades
For ever and for ever..."

He resolves

"To follow knowledge like a sinking star
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought."

Though *Ulysses* reveals social consciousness it is charged with the spirit of escapism, as typical Victorian poems are. *Ulysses* seeks to escape from the tasks that society imposes upon him. He does not want to shoulder the responsibilities of a king. He prefers to leave them to his son Telemachus. His purpose is to work far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife- "to sail beyond the sunset, and the baths of all the western stars."

Ulysses reveals the idealism that characterizes great Victorian poems. *Ulysses* has seen and known much; still he is allured by the noble ideal which consists in ceaseless work till death. Old age does not mean rest from work. It has its own honour and toil. Thus he says,

"Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all; but something ere the end
Some work of noble note, may yet be done."

Like an idealist he is fired by the aspiration for the unattainable and the infinite. So he is very eager to go out on a new voyage with his own companions in search of undiscovered shores and fresh adventures.

Victorian poetry is marked by the conflict between science and religion. *Ulysses* shows this conflict in the contrast of the characters of *Ulysses* and his son Telemachus. *Ulysses* embodies the Victorian passion for the exploration of new kingdoms of science and Telemachus the respect for traditional religion. When *Ulysses* will adventure for knowledge, his son will pay "Meek adoration to my household gods."

Like a typical Victorian poem *Ulysses* gives a beautiful but accurate description of nature. The following lines,

"The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices...."

present the brilliant picture of the evening landscape of Ithaca with lights twinkling from the houses on the rocks, the moon slowly rising in the eastern sky and the sea roaring in the distance.

Thus Tennyson's "Ulysses" is a superb creation of artistic excellence. With Keatsian pictorial quality, his astonishing command of musical resources of language is blended so accurately that it had become a landmark in English literature. It expresses the philosophy of the poet as well as the energy and resolution of his age. Stopford A. Brooke aptly remarks about Tennyson as a representative poet of his age: "His age was vividly with him, and he wrote of patriotism, of the proper conception of freedom, of the sad condition of the poor, of the woman's position in the onward movement of the world, of the place of commerce and science in that movement, of war as the remedy of selfishness the evils of commerce and of tireless striving for knowledge of which *Ulysses* is the finest example".