

“Tithonus”

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,  
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,  
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,  
And after many a summer dies the swan.  
Me only cruel immortality Consumes;  
I wither slowly in thine arms,  
Here at the quiet limit of the world,  
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream  
The ever-silent spaces of the East,  
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—  
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,  
Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd  
To his great heart none other than a God! I ask'd thee, “Give me  
immortality.”

Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,  
Like wealthy men who care not how they give.  
But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,  
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,  
And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd  
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,  
Immortal age beside immortal youth,  
And all I was in ashes.

Can thy love Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,  
Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,  
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears  
To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:  
Why should a man desire in any way  
To vary from the kindly race of men,  
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance  
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes  
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.  
Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals  
From any pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,  
And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.  
Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,  
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,  
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team

Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,  
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,  
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.  
Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful

In silence, then before thine answer given  
Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,  
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,  
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?

“The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.”

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart

In days far-off, and with what other eyes I used to watch (if I be he that  
watch'd)

The lucid outline forming round thee; saw

The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;

Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood

Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all

Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,

Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm

With kisses balmier than half-opening buds

Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd

Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,

Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,

While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East;

How can my nature longer mix with thine?  
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold  
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet  
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam  
Floats up from those dim fields about the home s  
Of happy men that have the power to die,  
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.  
Release me, and restore me to the ground;  
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave:  
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;  
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,  
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

## **LECTURE NOTES:**

### **1-The Poem:**

- The publishing of the poem is delayed until 1842. Because the mood of the poem does not suit the more buoyant and optimistic look of the
- The poem can be read as a dramatic monologue of classical subject because there is only one speaker who tells the entire story,
- The poem is based of classical myth: the love of Goddess Aurora(God of dawn) for Tithonus.

**4-Procedure:** the main procedure is not to depict individuals but the circumstances that individuals are putting in.

**5-Tone:** the tone is elegiac and tragic.

**6-Message:** the poem teaches us the truth that man should not desire to change his race or wish to exceeds human power because this leads to punishment. The poem is a plea for acceptance life with all beauty and limitation.

**7- Form:** the poem falls into seven parts of varying lines. It is written in blank or free verse because there is no consistent rhyme scheme or pattern of meter in the piece.

## **8- Summary:**

The poem describes the sorrow of Tithonus who is granted immortality by his lover, the Goddess of Dawn. The poem starts with the depiction of the natural movement of the world. He will live the pain of old age for ever. He wishes to die. Immortality turns to be the cause of losing his humanity. He is not man but a shadow. He tells how he gains immortality by asking Eos for immortality and her granting it to him without considering his youth. He will never pass beyond the "goal of ordinance" or reach death, as other men do. It is obvious to him now the mistake he has made. Every morning of Tithonus' life he is forced to see the sun rise and observe Eos' chariot take her into the sky where he once adored her. It describes the plight of Tithonus who is cursed to an immortal life in which he continues to age.

## **8- The downward movements in the poem:**

- the wood falls down
- the clouds "weep", rainfall down
- plough the land, die bury in the same land.