

A Subaltern's Love-song Notes

Genre

Genre: dramatic monologue - direct self explanation of assumed persona which poet employs to prove moral point by use of dramatic irony

ambiguity in title: bird song - territorial/aggressive - popular culture - mismatch between either interpretation and the rank of "subaltern"

Language

Exclamations - significant of emotion - four in stanza nine in one couplet!!!!

Names

Diction -use of names to summon up spirit - formal, full, socially exclusive, double-barrelled name

Significant name - Joan (Derby and Joan; Joan doth keel the pot; St Joan) suggests ordinariness not beauty

Significant name - Hunter - predatory implications

Dunn - cf John Donne the poet's joke: John Donne, Anne Donne, undone: famous metaphysical poet - erotic implications; The Flea

Imagery

that is obliquely complementary "speed of a swallow, the grace of a boy" but equally may have derogatory implications

symbolism: racket in press - constrictive heartiness

driving with lady in driving seat - symbolism

vanquished in sport victor in love - paradox?

Content

(Includes Theatrical elements like costume/ setting)

Setting - (part of theatrical nature of the genre)

like an estate agent's brochure: summer house, euonymous, verandah, conifers, moss-dapled path, oak stair, Golf Club, roads no adopeted, cream coloured walls - like Cotswold limestone, low leaded windows - Aldershot - Camberley - the British Army staff college - Golf and tennis - the socially exclusive pastimes

Costume

costume - blazer and shorts - masculine; public school_

Physiognomy of characterisation:

burnished (covered in freckles/tan? - outdoor sporty type?)
shock-headed (red-haired? cropped hair?)
swing past the summer-house - holding hands and swinging in jolly hockey sticks
bounciness?
strongly adorable tennis-girl's hand - a firm grip and a firm personality
tilt of her nose - retrouse nose indication of pugnacious tenacity

Sound

Appropriate devices for love poetry/magic spells but absurd in context

Repetition - incantatory quality

Internal rhymes

"Furnish'd and burnish'd"

"mad I am, sad I am, glad" - echo of famous comment on Byron: mad, bad, and dangerous to know
Lady Caroline Lamb's comment on predatory paramour

Paradox that implies feminine guile - "carefullest carelessness" (cf curiosa felicitas)

Neologism to enhance romantic magic -:

"mushroomy, pine-woody, everygreen smells"