



Global Aestheticism: A Thematic Study of Selected Comprehensive Verse in the 1990s

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Abstract

The form of selected poetic works from the 1990s is analysed from a formalist perspective in order to examine the thematic power of contemporary verse writing and the priorities in considering social issues. The analysis included two pairs of poems, each written in the same periodical atmosphere. *A Unicorn Called Ariel's* language is nationalistic because of a social truth about the queen. *Deaths in Orissa* depicts grief and agony. *The Strand* plays a crucial role in the findings of this paper due to its unique short form and peerless variety of interpretations. *The Dragon* imitates exile and dictatorship and is full of allusions and terminology, which also resembles an example of a successful literary translation. Under the new postmodern ideologies, literature did not lose its ability to mesmerize readers by associating discourse analysis with factual reality.

Keywords: Abd al-Wahhab Al-Bayyati, contemporary poetry, figures of speech, Mahapatra, Ted Hughes.

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1. Introduction

Contemporary poetry embodies contemporary thoughts and social commentary. From one vantage point, it reflects the same responses of mercy and compassion toward the human condition as well as against oppressive ideological regimes. In the world of written literature, concepts cannot exist independently of that delightful amusement. There are unseen soldiers beneath the ink, struggling to create an art form. The figure of speech is a term that refers to the linguistic and wordplay characteristics of language. The use of figurative language elevates a plain text to the level of art. The stylistic approach has become critical in recent literary studies, owing to the empirical factors contained in a large amount of data that can be used as a new starting point for future research. Figurative language is a type of literary device that combines the beauty of language with the moral standards

of a culture. According to (Leech 49) there can be several levels of deviation in a literary style, whereas semantic deviation includes the occurrence of figures of speech and rhetoric. He adds that allusion, paradox, metonymy, pun, and hyperbole are also different types of semantic oddity and meaning transference (ibid.132), and therefore represent linguistic deviations that define the literary style. This study tries to use Leech's semantic deviation without talking about how each verse looked at other types of stylistics.

The procedure entails examining modern English poems written by writers born in the United Kingdom thematically and comparing them to poems written in the same year by second language speakers from other countries. The study's limitations stem from the formalistic analysis of each sample within a modernist framework. Each pair of samples chosen were written in the same



year. The research problem initiates a discussion about the variation in wordplay and structure among contemporary written poems, particularly in the early 1990s. While a formalistic approach examines only the text of the work, it is worthwhile to connect this analysis to the author's cultural background in order to determine whether or not his figurative language is influenced by his cultural background. This is a big problem for research, and the fact that there isn't much written about it may help to justify this work.

The investigation will be based on a formalistic analysis of literary works published over a four-year period (1992-1996). In the case of poetry, the publication date is not always determinative due to the nature and subject matter of the poem, but the author still has a case for including a particular poem in a selected collection published in a particular year. If not necessary, it is reasonable to address two possible interpretations of the current double-edged title. It can be thought of as evaluative research in which the range of qualitative figures of speech in various poems is examined, as well as the degree to which each verse is flexible. Alternatively, it looks at the effect of not sounding native to English as a foreign author. This study attempts to encompass both edges.

When this study attempts to conduct research in an academic setting, some critical questions arise, and the following discussion will attempt to provide logical answers. Even if it fails at times, it will serve as a springboard for future research. The research questions are:

- Are certain types of poetic figures of speech on the verge of extinction?
- Does a foreign writer's cultural background influence how he or she uses the English language in poetry?
- Is modern globalisation altering the form of art produced in the early 1990s?
- Do foreigners' images of figurative language reveal their artificiality and dissimulation?

2. Figurative language and style

A literal statement reveals a dictionary's meaning. Literal language communicates

thoughts and ideas precisely. They do not change the meaning. So plain language is easy to grasp. This style of language is frequently employed in scientific, technical, and legal papers. Figurative language utilises words or statements that have a meaning other than their literal interpretation. Literature frequently uses figurative language, which is more complex than literal language. Language is made more sophisticated and metaphorical by using figures of speech such as similes, metaphors, personification, etc.

Gibbs et al. add that many philosophers, linguists, and literary theorists assume that people deduce the intended figurative meaning of a sentence by first analysing the sentence's literal meaning. This, they claim, is in accordance with the principle of cooperative communication. According to this theory, the use of figurative language necessitates additional cognitive effort because it defies conversational norms. There has long been the belief that figurative language distorts reality and serves only rhetorical purposes, whereas literal language is a true reflection of thought and the external world. People may be able to distinguish figurative language from literal language, but this conscious judgement is based on linguistic interpretation and should not be used as evidence for the psychological mechanisms underlying figurative language comprehension. Numerous instances of figurative language, including metaphor, irony, idioms, proverbs, and indirect speech acts, can be interpreted without first analysing and rejecting their literal meanings when these tropes are encountered in realistic social contexts, as is now well-established in psycholinguistics. (387).

3. A Unicorn Named Ariel and Deaths in Orissa Analysis

Two poems, originally written in English, are examined in this section for their formalistic elements. One of them, *A Unicorn Named Ariel*, was written by the native poet Ted Hughes in his collection *Rain-charm for the Duchy*, and the other, *Deaths in Orissa*, was written by Jayanta Mahapatra, the most prominent poet of contemporary Indian poetry, who is considered a foreigner to the



English language in his collection *A Whiteness of Bone*. Both books were published in 1992, and they were chosen at random from their respective collections to be included in this investigation. Each poem is examined in turn, with a final analysis and discussion to follow. It is necessary to look at the structure and form of both poems before diving into the figurative language and aesthetic approaches collected during this investigation.

A Unicorn Named Ariel consists of 30 lines divided into 10 stanzas. Each stanza is structured in the form of tercets— three-line stanzas (see Quinn 398). Each one has its own particular regular rhyme scheme, for instance: She leaves her horn to guard her crown.

A

She sends her horse to gallop the down.

A

She walks as a woman into the town.

A

Democracies and Tyrannies

B

Are up in the air or on their knees -

B

The globe's a trampoline to these.

B

The Ape's brow bursts to reinvent

C

What govern and bewilder meant -

C

Madness comes where most thought went. C (Hughes 46)

Each stanza contains a unique united rhyming syllable, resulting in ten distinct rhyme schemes from beginning to end, and the variation in this brief poem suggests a simple and direct language use that avoids an excessive repetition of the closing syllable's tone. This simplicity reminds us of Hardy's *The Convergence of the Twain*, where a consistent wave of returning sounds helps to mimic the tide and self-prediction. Most of the lines are written in iambic tetrameter intonation.

From the start, the title alludes to the unicorn "Pegasus," a mythical creature mentioned in the Bible. In her encyclopaedia, Rosemary Guiley refers to "Ariel" as the "lion of God." Additionally, she notes that it

appears in Irish Gaelic prayers for the protection of the home and hearth. (52) This imaginary supernatural force brings hope and salvation to the United Kingdom; hence, this poem was written to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's accession. According to his notes, Hughes imagines a supernatural being arriving on Middle-Earth. He also adds that "geopolitical corrective" means imposing "political correctness" on a "solar" scale. Similarly, the Russian winter that froze Napoleon's and Hitler's troops is a geopolitical fact. It also means what it says—that you behave as those who have power can force you to behave. She has landed on a globe where the two alternative political forms, tyranny and democracy, are equally helpless in the violent hands of history. And where the human primate, striving to gain control over these erratic forces, promotes them, because of his nature. (63)

Scotland is represented by the "Unicorn's horn," Ireland by "Queen Mab," and England by Prospero. Albion (Albion was the world's term for hallowed Great Britain three hundred years before Julius Caesar) is the only place where this power craving is restrained-by the magical unicorn's horn, by the monarch's supernatural immunity to the British Democratic Idea, and by Prospero's promise. Ariel, her magical or "divine" mount, gallops her rounds as if tightrope-walking over the heavings of a planet that is actually the skin of Yin and Yang. The entire assemblage represents a Great Britain that has been enchanted by a supremely sanctioned democracy. This Chinese emblem of alternating extremes is another manifestation of the "historical forces" that bounce "tyrannies and democracies" on the earth's skin. Britain's freedom from such somersaults is a result of Ariel's victory in the race. (ibid. 64)

Hughes evidently uses figures of speech in the first stanza, "She leaves her horn to guard her crown. /She sends her horse to gallop the down. /She walks as a woman into the town." (1-3), and alliteration is used in the first line to maintain an intonation reminiscent of the words *her, horn,*



and *her*. The horse in the second line is a metaphor for the Queen's wise decisions in order to win the democratic race. Additionally, the third line contains a simile containing the word "as," which may metaphorically allude to the Queen's humility as she walks through the town's streets. The second stanza, "Democracies and Tyrannies/Are up in the air or on their knees-/The globe's a trampoline to these." (4-6) describes the situation between the two political factions, democracies and tyrannies, and concludes with another metaphor, comparing the world to a trampoline for them, with one jumping and the other landing. The third stanza employs no technique other than metaphorically describing the leaders of the political scene with an image of a primate perplexed by the political situation. "The Ape's brow bursts to reinvent/What govern and bewilder meant—/Madness comes where most thought went," says the fourth verse. (7-9) begins with an image of people's tears becoming incendiary as a result of the chaos created by repressive regimes. The repetition of the sound /p/ in: puts, power, and perspective maintains rhythmic coherence in the third line of this stanza, all of which contribute to the tone and visionary image.

The sixth verse is replete with allusions: "Only in Albion a magic hand, /A Unicorn's horn or Queen Mab's wand, /Or Prospero's word, holds all spellbound." (10-12) Albion is the ancient name for the United Kingdom, while the magical hand represents Wales. Mab, the Queen of the Fairies, is a character from English folklore and Shakespeare. She is the embodiment of Ireland. And Prospero, Milan's legitimate duke who represents England. It is a "spellbound" democracy that has been supernaturally sanctioned across the entire United Kingdom. In other words, this is a verse representation of the royal arms. The next stanza, "The Island's Ariel reappears. / Tiptoes the tightrope of our fears / And franks our freedom forty years." (13-15) It also begins with an allusive *Ariel* to that supernatural power compared to Queen Elizabeth II. According to literary theory, since this poem is

written in the present simple tense, it allows the reader to evoke hope and feel reality. Furthermore, it is appropriate to have it sung as a lyrical poem. Alliterative /f/ permeate the final line of this stanza to construct emphasis on the closing part of the stanza and create a lyrical tone as well. This line also concludes the end of Her Majesty's four decades of reign.

The eighth verse's middle line, "Yin gobbles Yang, Yang gobbles Yin." (23) contains an elegant artistic use of metaphor. "Yin-Yang" refers to a cosmic opposing duality force that has always existed to keep the world in balance. This symbol transports the reader back to the second stanza, which contrasts tyranny and democracy. Nonetheless, there is an issue with this line, as it is an alliteration of the sounds /j/ and /g/. The poem continues with additional instances of alliteration and repetition in clear, simple, and direct language. It is fair to mention that the figurative language distribution in this poem seems to be minutely approximated. The majority of tercets begin with symbols and allusions and conclude with alliteration in syntactic rhythmic order. That is what causes the reader's pulse to quicken as he reads each stanza, knowing he is about to reach a breath-taking section when he reaches the next.

Deaths in Orissa is a 20-line figurative poem divided into three unequal-length stanzas; the first and third are quintains, while the second is a dizain with ten lines. The three stanzas, with their irregular rhyme scheme, form a poem that resembles an article with an introduction, body, and conclusion. The title is a direct reference to the human condition of pain and weariness. People in Orissa (Odisha), the state where Mahapatra was born, face death, poverty, and fear. Sharma adds in her article that *A Whiteness of Bone* is a book in which Mahapatra expresses his deep concern about the deterioration of morale among the country's leaders and the unchecked growth in violent crime. However, Mahapatra is not a reclusive poet who prefers to live in an ivory tower; rather, he is concerned about the dismal state of his homeland. (73)

Chelliah mentions that Mahapatra's Indianness shines in his poetry on Orissa,



where the particular and regional become universal. The Orissa poems, *Orissa landscapes*, and *Dawn at Puri* are all Oriya and so Indian. Without a doubt, poverty, hunger, and starvation are the most important aspects of the Indian masses' lives. They are a recurring motif in Mahapatra's poetry. Hunger, *The Whorehouse on the Corner of Calcutta Street*, and *Man of His Night* all take different approaches to the subject. These poems also address masculine sexuality and female exploitation. The poet's poetry has a tragic-pessimistic tone due to his awareness of the Indian people's poverty and suffering, as well as women's libido in a male-dominated culture. (35) His poetry is heavily influenced by the Orissan scenery, culture, social life, and ceremonies and rituals. This reflects Mahapatra's regional feedback. Despite his strong regionalist tendencies, his poetry is not constrained or narrow in its themes. Mahapatra is about love, sex, marriage, morality, and human nature. Mahapatra is the only poet who has put a certain part of India on the map of Indo-English poetry while also emphasising how dark and mysterious it is.

In his piece, Pattanayak remarks on this poem, calling it a heart-warming poem. In this poem, the poet laments the tragic deaths of women at the hands of their in-laws. It is depicted in mysterious language by the poet. Suicide or murder of women is not a difficult task in today's society. If a woman loses her sense of belonging, she hangs herself; if she is aggressive, her husband, possessive lover, or in-laws murder her. Mahapatra empathises with the bereaved or the murdered. He barks at the murderer 'like a dog'. To summarise, Mahapatra is a traditional Oriya poet who sings not with the murderer but with the murdered, and shares the bread of his poverty with the silent slave rather than the cunning master. (216)

The anaphoric use of "nothing but" in "nothing but impotence in lowered eyes, / nothing but the tightening of the muscles" the second verse appeals to the reader's emotions, or pathos. By repeating a word or phrase, readers develop an expectation for the following line. They are lured into the text

by a sensation of involvement. Also, it draws attention to the next image, which is an informational image showing visions of sadness and death.

4. *The Strand and The Dragon Analysis*

This section compares two 1996-published poems, and the subsequent discussion focuses on formalist analysis. The short, one-stanza poem *The Strand* by Heaney is contrasted with the longer, more complex poem *The Dragon* by Al-Bayyati. The former, composed by the Irish poet Seamus Heaney, appears to generate the same level of interest and variety of interpretations as his longer works, and this section seeks to determine how it connects the dots and performs connotation. *The Dragon*, on the other hand, is an aggressive political verse that depicts social truth and contains historical references to the abusive practices of dictators, beginning with a national dictatorship and ending with globalisation. The discussion begins by decoding the words stylistically to reveal their artistic aesthetic.

The Strand is a three-line stanza that begins with a ten-syllable line, followed by a five-syllable line: "The dotted line my father's ashplant made/On Sandymount Strand." These two lines make up the subject, and the final line provides the predicate: "Is something else the tide will not wash away." (75) Clearly, the entire poem consists of a single descriptive sentence with a single connecting verb. This tercet begins with a dashed line drawn by the father of the speaker, which may have multiple meanings. A dotted line consists of a series of dots used to teach children how to write alphabetic letters, and fathers are teachers who might establish several rules that guide their sons to draw a solid line upon that. It may also refer to an aged father who is no longer able to draw a clear, solid line, and the "ashplant" is a good support for this claim because it is frequently used as a walking stick by older people.

In his book, (De Angelis 34) mentions that the strand represents eternity, relying on Heaney's personal letter. He also claims that in *Vitruviana*, Heaney contrasts the Proteus event of Joyce's *Ulysses* with the passage



from Eliot's *The Waste Land*: "On Margate Sands. /I can connect/Nothing with nothing" (77). It is also intriguing to compare Heaney's attitude to the tide. Potentially hostile and destructive here, with the "longed-for tidal wave" viewed as a liberating force in *The Cure at Troy* (1990), where the chorus says:
History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave,
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme. (53).

Several interpretations are possible for this verse. Let us consider that the dotted line was literally made by the ashplant bump on the ground when the speaker's father fell to his death on the beach, and that the speaker's vision of his father's death was a shock that he would never forget. The final line of the verse may provide support for this assertion, as tides are capable of washing any type of change onto the beach's sand face. However, the figurative alter on that face etched by that scene of death is indeed unforgettable. Sandymount Strand, a real beach in Dublin that is associated with themes of nationality, eternity, and loss, is the setting suggested by the form. Due to the methodological approach utilised for this philosophical analysis, this interpretation can never be false. Formalism holds that meaning emerges when the form speaks.

The verse has internal intonation through the musical distribution of assonance among the three lines, and the consonance that occurs in "won't wash away" works for that as well. There is an enjambment represented by the division of one statement into a tercet. Thus, if the reader reads only the first line or the second line, he will not find sense until he reaches the end. Here, Heaney escapes the restrictive rules governing the composition as expected from a postmodern writer and, at the same time, reveals the relativity and connectivity of the form elements. The exaggeration in "the tide won't wash away." Hyperbole is a very important part of making wordplay, connotation, and figurative language stand out.

In terms of world literature, it is very important to look at a Middle Eastern literary work created by the Iraqi poet Abd al-Wahhab al-Bayyati. *The Dragon* is a poem published in 1996, originally in Arabic and translated to English by Farouk Abdel Wahab, Najat Rahman, and Carolina Hotchandani. What leads this investigation to examine a translated version of the work is the methodology of this paper itself. As previously stated, a formalistic approach places no emphasis on the author's autobiographical background or the historical significance of literature. The figurative language used in this poem compared to that in Heaney's is the only criterion for this investigation.

The Dragon is a 50-line poem divided into two stanzas; the first is 46 lines long and the second is a quatrain; both have no fixed metric length, no specified rhyme scheme, and no fixed rhythm, all of which are characteristics of blank verse. The opening stanza employs a narrative technique in the form of a poem. As demonstrated in the first five lines:

A dictator, hiding behind a nihilist's mask,
has killed and killed and killed,
pillaged and wasted,
but is afraid, he claims,
to kill a sparrow.
(Weissbort 48)

The first line is written in iambic pentameter, the second in iambic trimeter, the third in dimeter, and so on. Rather than emphasising the structure, this form emphasises the importance of the descriptive images introduced at the beginning of the poem.

The dragon is an example of Al-Bayyati's frequent integration of legendary elements into his poems. The title suggests a mythical creature that represents evilness and aggression, "the dragon." It is clear from the use of the definite article 'the' that the poem is attached to a specific person, and this resembles a unique metaphor that starts from the title to the very end of the last line. The repetition of 'killed' in the second line stresses the amount and the variety of people killed by a dictator. This stanza is full of enjambment, where the sense runs over from line to line:



"pillaged and wasted, /but is afraid, he claims, / to kill a sparrow." (48). This technique raised in romanticism is also called "end-stopped line" (Cuddon 217). It helps the reader combine successive lines into one longer, clearer, interpretable line that ends with a period. In "Satan used to be an original," the text allusively compares Satan to this dictator, who appears as more merciful than this dictator, which gives the reader an intuition of how much Saddam Hussein harmed his people. Allusion continues in the following line, mentioning three public modern poets of Latin America: Pablo Neruda, George Amado, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. These writers are known for their abhorrence of dictatorship.

Despite the aggressive attack on the dictator through the context, verbal irony takes its path in the following lines. "He's burned the last soothsayer who failed to kneel before the idol." By addressing the soothsayer as a 'failure' and the dictator as an "idol", the description of chaos after war continues to reach the full imaginary of injustice. The text metaphorically compares the soldiers who lost the war to frightened fleeing 'rabbits' one time and to innocent 'children' another time. A symbolic appearance in "his picture" stands for Saddam's ruined reputation among his people: "his picture is now underfoot, trampled by history's worn shoes." History doesn't wear shoes, but the preceding line makes it more vivid by giving it the human attribute of wearing shoes. The second stanza does nothing but continue the imagination with symbolism and a questionnaire:

From the Caribbean to China's Great Wall,
the dictator-dragon is being cloned.
When will you do it, St George?
When will you slay the
dragon? (Weissbort 49)

The first line symbolises all the countries and inhibited lands over the seven continents—that means everywhere on earth, the concept of dictator is cloned. Even if this dragon dies, another dragon will be born elsewhere. In his article on Iraqi poetry, (Najm 46), adds that Al-Bayyati's broad use of symbols, stories, and other material from

various sources is consistent with the poem's reference to St. George as a legendary or religious hero. Finally, the text finishes the description with rhetorical questions by attempting to raise the emotional temperature of the reader: "When will you do it, St George?/When will you slay the dragon?" (49) According to Cuddon 559, these are the questions that are hard to answer because they show surprise, amazement, or anger.

5. Conclusion

The philosophy of language has permitted humanistic approaches lately. Literal language was unable to make art without the impact of figurative language, which asserted some key points in the reader's mind according to specific connections caused by variations. The usage of figurative language in a literary work never relied on the author himself alone; it has been inherent in the language of that work since the last draught began to appear. The goal of this study was to decode the codes of some modern poems written in English by both native and non-native speakers.

The study finds a high variation in employing different types of literary techniques as well as figures of speech amongst all literary pieces examined. The language of *A Unicorn Called Ariel* stems from a highly nationalistic belonging triggered by a social truth about the queen concerned. In contrast to *Deaths in Orissa*, the form of *A Unicorn Called Ariel*, a poem full of allusions and visionary images, is systematically regular, rhymed, and easy to depict reality, which added to the beauty of the poem. Additionally, the language of this poem plainly concludes social satisfaction and public opinion in England. It reinforces the positive purpose of art. In contrast, *Deaths in Orissa*, on the other hand, works as a portrayal of human grief and agony by showing a deep concern about the deterioration of morale among the country's leaders and the unchecked growth in violent crime, as Sharma (2018) approves in her article. The text literally suggests a negative portrayal of human suffering associated somehow with feminism, but figurative language allows some



kind of hope for a better tomorrow. Allusion, imagery, anaphora, repetition, personification, and metaphor used in these two poems serve to exclude the possibility of extinction of a certain kind of figure of speech because the language innately creates them throughout the text without relying on the intended meaning of the author.

The Strand plays a crucial role in the findings of this paper due to its unique short form and peerless variety of interpretations based on a one-sentence poem. It produces an internal tone governed by a clever use of syllables institutionalised by figurative language distribution in one sentence. It also resembles the power of language in controlling ideas that revolve around a brief set of words. The style analysis shows that each poem in a collection has a hidden effect on the other poems in the collection and vice versa. This is because the context adds to and takes away from each piece in a collection of poems, and it is important to note that each poem looked at in this paper is from a collection. World literature demonstrates that contemporary international poetry is influenced by the ideological impact of societies, and postmodern poetry replicates both the public and the individual simultaneously. *The Dragon*, which imitates exile and dictatorship, is replete with allusions and terminology from all eras. Figurative language functions intelligently, and this is a clear example of an effective literary translation. This illustrates that images created by figurative language do not disclose any artificiality or dissimulation in the writing of non-native English writers. The whole discussion comes to the conclusion that literature hasn't lost its power to captivate readers just because new postmodern ideologies link thematic analysis with facts.

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Appendix 1

A Unicorn Called Ariel

She leaves her horn to guard her crown.
She sends her horse to gallop the down.
She walks as a woman into the town.

Democracies and Tyrannies

Are up in the air or on their knees -



The globe's a trampoline to these.

The Ape's brow bursts to reinvent
What govern and bewilder meant -
Madness comes where most thought went.

Those oceanic tears are dry.
Thermodynamic anarchy
Boils the dream in every eye.

Earth's solar fate is non-elective:
This geopolitical corrective
Puts power-junkies in perspective.

Only in Albion a magic hand,
A Unicorn's horn or Queen Mab's wand,
Or Prospero's word, holds all spellbound.

The Island's Ariel reappears.
Tiptoes the tightrope of our fears
And franks our freedom forty years.

Under the course's jumpy skin
Yin gobbles Yang, Yang gobbles Yin.
But her Favourite's cool, as if still to begin.

Villains, disasters in the sun -
How could such odds trouble one
Who has done what she has done. ^

The Unicorn can only win
The race that she was born to run.
If hearts are gold, the money's on.

Appendix 2

Deaths in Orissa

Faces of tree-bark and grief hang against
God's hand in the world that cannot lift itself
up to help. In the corners of women's eyes
the rainbow breaks against the sunrise.
Nothing but the paddy's twisted throat
exposed on the crippled bleak earth, nothing
but impotence in lowered eyes,
nothing but the tightening of the muscles in
Bhagyabati's neck which her outcaste mother
would herself have liked to throttle to death,
nothing but the cries of shriveled women
cracking against the bloodied altar of Man,
nothing but the moment of fear when they
need a God who can do them some good. Oh I
am a poet who barks like a dog. Open the

window, I say, so I can breathe. Let not my
memory be like a tiger in ambush. But there is
this dangerously alive body and only a baton
or knife can tear it apart.

Appendix 3

The Strand

The dotted line my father's ashplant made On
Sandymount Strand Is something else the tide
won't wash away.

Appendix 4

The Dragon

A dictator, hiding behind a nihilist's mask, has
killed and killed and killed, pillaged and
wasted, but is afraid, he claims, to kill a
sparrow. His smiling picture is everywhere: in
the coffeehouse, in the brothel, in the
nightclub, and the marketplace. Satan used to
be an original, now he is just the dictator's
shadow. The dictator has banned the solar
calendar, abolished Neruda, Marquez, and
Amado, abolished the Constitution; he's given
his name to all the squares, the open spaces,
the rivers, and all the jails in his blighted
homeland. He's burned the last soothsayer
who failed to kneel before the idol. He's doled
out death as a gift or a pledge. His watchdogs
have corrupted the land,
stolen the people's food, raped the Muses,
raped the widows of the men who died under
torture,
raped the daughters and widows of his
soldiers who lost the war, from which, like
rabbits in clover fields, they had run away,
leaving behind corpses of workers and
peasants, writers and artists, twenty-year-old
children, carpenters and ironsmiths, hungry
and burned under the autumn sky, all forcibly
led to slaughter, killed by invaders, alien and
homegrown.

The dictator hides his disgraced face in the
mud. Now he is having a taste of his own
medicine,
and the pillars of deception have collapsed,
his picture is now underfoot, trampled by
history's worn shoes. The deposed dictator is
executed in exile, another monster is crowned
in the hapless homeland. The hourglass
restarts, counting the breaths of the new
dictator, lurking everywhere,



in the coffeehouse, the brothel, in the
nightclub, and the marketplace.

From the Caribbean to China's Great Wall, the
dictator-dragon is being cloned. When will
you do it, St George? When will you slay the
dragon?

