

The types of poems we have been analyzing are called elegies, and are different from sonnets because we know before hand who the poem is about. In most cases, elegies are written for people who are dead, but as said in class, “Ave Atque Vale” was written for a man who was in the process of dying. Most, if not all, of the groups noticed the Greek mythology as well as elements of nature mentioned in both of the elegies. Stanza nine in “Ave Atque Vale” uses words like fire, flame, air, and wind to relate them to death and life. “Adonais” also ties in words like frost, air and flowers in the first three stanzas. In class, we were given a deeper explanation of why flower references were so frequently used in “Ave Atque Vale,” and it is because of the French poem “Les Fleurs du Mal.”

John Schaffstall in his post did a very close annotation of the two elegies. A point he made, which was also discussed in class, was the very first line of “Ave Atque Vale.” “Shall I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel” uses strong alliteration to bring the readers attention to the three flowers being used, each having different meanings. As described in the footnotes below, the three meanings of the flowers start the poem out with a very different approach than “Adonais” does. The speaker does not know whether to indulge in the pain of the love he has for the person, mourn, or praise the achievements of the subject in the poem.

Anthony Mucciarone describes the elegy to Keats, “Adonais,” as being “filled with mournful imagery and sadness, from the picture is frozen in time.” He also points out that the poem is filled with metaphoric language and personification, which is where the nature imagery comes into play. I agree with Anthony when he says that much of the imagery is sad and mournful. He begins his poem with talking about weeping for Adonais, where as Swinburne starts out with the uncertainty of how to remember and honor Baudelaire. I will admit that these two poems are much more difficult to read and annotate. Their length is intimidating, but once engaged in them, the beauty of the personification and language really comes through in both, whether it is the dark and sadness of death, or the calming and peaceful images of the sun and shore that ends “Ave Atque Vale.”

Kelly Fontana