

Ode to Clothes

-*Pablo Neruda*

“Clothes mean nothing until someone
lives in them.”

-Marc Jacobs

TOPICS TO BE COVERED

- ◉ Pablo Neruda: An Introduction
- ◉ Central Idea of the poem
- ◉ Summary & Analysis
- ◉ Literary Devices
- ◉ An Activity to understand its contemporary relevance

Resources to be consulted:

<http://trendsupdates.com/pablo-neruda-poetry-of-seemingly-simple-things/>



Pablo Neruda (July 12, 1904 – September 23, 1973) pen name and the legal name of the great Chilean poet-writer-politician Neftali Ricardo Reyes Basoalto. Received Nobel Prize in the year 1971.

CENTRAL IDEA

The **poet** wonders that one day he might be killed by a bullet from an enemy, staining his **clothes** with blood; or naturally he may slowly get sick and die together. He feels that his **clothes** and he **are** one, and **will** face life's struggles together till the day he dies.

Ode to Clothes : Summary

In initial lines , Neruda is personifying his clothes as waiting out the night for morning, to serve its purpose and be filled by our bodies, hopes, vanities and love. Neruda describes his morning routine in literal terms - waking, getting out of bed, and dressing. His clothing gives him tireless fidelity. In it, he goes out to face the world. He makes the clothes what they are, pushing out their sleeves and seams, and so the life of his clothes are made in his image.

Later on poet feels, our clothes live with us, and if we are struck down by a bullet, our blood stains them and they die with us. Or maybe the clothes will sicken gradually with us as we die slowly, and together we enter the earth with our clothes. With this in mind, everyday he greets his clothes with reverence. They embrace him, and then he forgets about them because they are one.

POEM(TEXT)

*Each morning you're waiting
My clothing, on a chair
For me to fill you
With my vanity, my love
My hope, my body
I hardly
Have gotten out of sleep
I say goodbye to the water
I enter into your sleeves
My legs look for
The hollowness of your legs
And so embraced
By your tireless faithfulness
You are like the sun in the sky
If one day
A bullet
From the enemy
Might leave a spot of my blood on you*

*And then
You would die with me
Or maybe
It won't all be
So dramatic
But simple
And you'll just get weak,
Clothing,
With me
Growing old
With me, with my body
And together
We will enter
The earth.
That's why
Every day
I greet you
With respect and then
You embrace me and I forget you.*

*Every morning you wait,
clothes, over a chair,
for my vanity,
my love,
my hope, my body*

*to fill you,
I have scarcely
left sleep,
I say goodbye to the water*



Lines 1-10 : All the activities of early morning which culminate in the poet getting dressed and ready for the day are listed here.

*and enter your sleeves,
my legs look for
the hollow of your legs,
and thus embraced
by your unwearying fidelity
I go out to tread the fodder, 15*

Lines 10- 12 :Personification: your sleeves, your legs

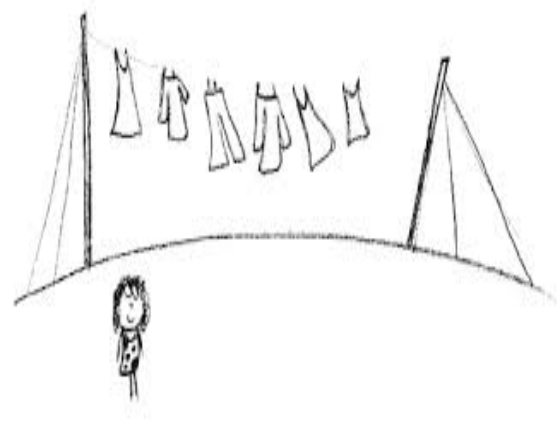
Line 15 : to tread the fodder : an activity related to farming –
an elemental occupation very basic to human existence

*I move into poetry
I look through windows,
at things,
men women,
actions and struggles 20*

Line 16-20 : move into poetry : get into the mode of intellectual and creative work, composing, writing, thinking about human life all around.

*keep making me what I am,
opposing me,
employing my hands,
opening my eyes,
putting taste in my mouth, 25
and thus,
clothes,
I make you what you are,
pushing out your elbows,
bursting the seams, 30*

Line 20-30 : Just as the poet's actions are caused by the life around him, his clothes receive their impetus from the poet. His movements give substance to his clothes as in a shirt elbow strained with movement.



*and so your life swells
the image of my life.*

You billow

and resound in the wind

as though you were my soul, 35

Line 31-32 :

Clothes fed the poet's vanity at the beginning of the poem; here they echo the workings of his mind and body (as though they were his soul).

*people with their phantoms
your wings and mine.
I ask
whether one day
a bullet 45
from the enemy
will stain you with blood
and then
you will die with me
or perhaps 50
it may not be
so dramatic
but simple,
and you will sicken gradually,
clothes, 55
with me, with my body
and together
we will enter
the earth. 59*

Line 43-59 : Thoughts of death in which clothes are his constant companions

*At the thought of this
every day*

60

I greet you

with reverence, and then

you embrace me and I forget you

because we are one

65

and will go on facing

the wind together, at night

the streets or the struggle,

one body,

maybe, maybe, one day motionless. 70

Line 60-70 : At first, reverence, and then an unselfconscious acceptance of oneness between the poet and his clothes.

Sound devices and figurative language

Sound Devices:

Consonance- " enter your sleeves/ my legs look for/ the hollows of your legs"

CONSONANCE :

The repetition of consonant sounds.

"The fair **b**reeze **b**lew, the white
foam **f**lew,

The **f**urrow **f**ollowed **f**ree;"

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

Figurative Language:

Metaphor: the whole poem could be an extended metaphor for a person/lover

Personification: The speaker's clothes represent the speaker and some other person

Symbols: Wind- Battle

Emotive language: speaker's apparent closeness with death

Metaphors

A comparison in which one thing is said to be another.

Example:

She is a walking dictionary.

PERSONIFICATION

Giving human qualities to animals or objects.

Example:

The stars winked at me.

Activity

Researchers have identified a series of psychological changes that occur when we wear certain clothes. For ex: **1.**Wearing uniforms and coats can make people more conscious of their duties and encourage them to pay more attention to their jobs.**2.** A casual and relaxed dress code at work helps us become more friendly.

write your own ways of outfit that change the way you think

3.....

4.....

5.....

6.....

7.....

Lets discuss and revise

Q1. Why does the poet compare clothes to his soul ?

Q2. How will the clothes die with the poet ?

Q3 What is another word for ODE

a) Epic b) Elegy c) Epigram d) All

Q4 Neruda's Clothes gives him tireless.....

Q5 The whole poem could be an extended
.....(Personification/Metaphor)

References and Image sources:

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