**The relevance of poetry in this day and age**

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Civilization, arising from the Latin word Civilis which in turn means civil, the word used to describe a nature of peace, understanding and courtesy. Despite the word’s roots laying in something so positive, humanity’s history has proven time and time again that every civilization, no matter how strong and overbearing eventually comes to a fall, every single one of these making the same mistakes leading back to a common starting point – a loss in morals. We’ve seen many such examples, take the Greeks, the Romans, the Egyptians; all at the top of their respective generations and yet succumbing to the same fate as their predecessors. A famous quote that everyone has certainly heard of “*Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it*”. While people are aware of the quote they fail to understand it. By remembering; the quote refers to learning from past mistakes, something every civilization claimed to do and yet failed to prove, and as the quote states, history is once again repeating itself before our very eyes.

As we live through the midst of a war-torn Palestine suffering at the wrath of Israel, we choose to look away, our leaders seek their own benefits, the people suffer the consequences of the state’s actions and no matter how much the common civilian aches to aid the weak, their limitations and helplessness prove these emotions worthless. And so, the most one can do is raise awareness, often to no avail. As simple words of awareness tend to brush past our ears and hearts, poetry takes their place to paint a picture to enable a deeper understanding. Poems from the past remain relevant to this day as history proves that we as humans make the same mistakes over and over through countless years and as aforementioned it all tracks back to a loss of morals, and what better to teach us morals than religion. For our convenience we’ll approach religion as faith in God and not a specific religion.

To give you a better understanding of this, I quote a poem by Mathew Arnold named “**Dover beach**”. Written during the Victorian era, to be more exact 1837-1901, this poem discusses the loss of religious faith that came with advances in various fields at the time. Through the use of symbolism of the sea, the author stresses on a key idea of society’s gradual distancing from faith as the waves represent gradual changes in humanity from a world of religion to that of a world of science. He describes it as a place of eternal sorrow which is evident throughout history. This was relevant during its own time and even today as we see time fly by ushering us into a world where its more common to be an atheist than a man of faith, a world where its you’re frowned upon for believing in a god, where science holds more value than nature. Words like these are nothing new to a majority of people but the vivid imagery that the author implements here is what gives it value and weight. Without explicitly telling us what he’s referring to, the author refers to the sad sound of waves moving pebbles up and down the shore, hinting at humanity’s sadness as a whole, as we live in a world where right or wrong is no longer deemed by morals but by material benefits, your worth as a person is judged based on what you can offer instead of who you are. Even though Mathew’s words were meant for a different time, we can relate to them even today, and although many have made the same claims, the reason Mathew Arnold’s words stick with us is because they provide vivid imagery which humans tend to hold on to for longer.

Continuing on from a loss of importance of morals to a sense of helplessness despite living through a literal war, we come to a poem by William Butler Yeats named “**The second coming**”. In this poem Yeats uses a falcon to personify a human losing control. He talks about how the world is in disarray describing a post apocalyptic scenery of chaos where good does not exist until he comes up to the lines “***The best lack all conviction, while the worst Are full of passionate intensity***”. These words describe how the kindest, most caring hearts witness the literal hell ensue and yet lack the motivation, the passion and the will to change something, to fight for a cause greater than themselves, while those with the shadowed hearts hold all the power and greed and need to continue their evil and selfish desires. We can see this exactly happen to this very day, let’s fall back to the war on Gaza; we’ve seen people from all over the world speak out on social media as they claim to feel the Palestinian citizen’s pain, we see these trends, these hashtags, these boycotts on brands which although in good nature doesn’t do much. My question to you being, if you were to go out and ask all these supporters to actually donate some money for the cause, to aid in the welfare programs, to fight on the frontlines, to urge their governments, barely anyone would step up. We have Muslim celebrities all over the world more concerned about losing their jobs than doing the right thing, exactly as Yeats describes it, a lack of conviction. Compare this to all the ruthless governments doing everything in their power to support Israel purely for personal gain. Yeats then talks about a second coming, a salvation, a glimmer of hope for change to come, throughout this he uses alliteration to make the words more memorable, an instance like “***Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born*”**. He also uses imagery and symbolism from the falcon that was referring to a human, to a beast with the body of a lion and the head of a human to signify a human’s hidden beastly nature, again powerful symbols and images like these stay in your mind through time.

But the one thing that history has time and time again shown the consequences of is war, something we as humans just can’t seem to learn from, to add to this I offer “**Dulce et Decorum Est**”, a poem by Wilfred Owen, a soldier of war who wrote this during his time in the army. Who better to describe the horrors of war than a soldier that has experienced it. Wilfred does his due diligence to honor his compatriots’ suffering and experience to truly do justice to what they went through. Throughout the poem he makes us witness a war’s frontlines through his own eyes. Wilfred describes the soldiers as looking like beggars, walking asleep to signify how tired they were, the fact that they almost seem disabled from the way they’re numb to what’s happening around them. He moves to describe a soldier that warned the others of poisonous gas but in doing so failed to protect himself, and as Wilfred witnesses him, he describes his death as a man drowning underwater in front of him, yet he’s unable to do anything. This image continues to haunt him for a while even after the war and he urges the readers to picture it, to witness what he saw. Here he attacks the claim that dying for your country is noble and an act of honor, Wilfred asks the reader to picture that dying man coughing up blood in recursive dreams and still tell themselves it’s an honor. This dying soldier although an actual person on the battlefield is also a symbol representing the millions of young men who are led astray by the false beliefs that war is glorious that end up dying horrible deaths in the hopes, they did it for the greater good when in reality they were nothing but pawns in this grand deadly game of chess between two countries’ leaders. This vivid imagery, urging the readers to put themselves in Wilfred’s shoes is a major strongpoint of this poem as it conveys feelings that simple words can’t. Everything you picture here is what not only soldiers but innocent civilians of all ages are forced to go through in the Palestinian genocide, and Wilfred’s words and experience serve a wonderful purpose to shed light on these fallen souls.

As we analyzed these poems, we saw they belong to a similar era, the late 19th century to the early 20th century, more than a hundred years old and yet the feelings these authors were able to instill in our hearts even now, the value these poems hold to this day, the word relevant is nearly an insult to these works of art. Even to this day these words are compelling and deserve acknowledgement, as does poetry. A simple blog post or a trend would not have the same effect on someone as picturing a scenery or themselves in the setting would and it’s due to the fact that poetry can reach not only your mind but your heart, and it does so using literary devices to aim for your feelings over your opinions, which makes poetry more than just rhyming words, but an everlasting work of art that we can forever learn from.