

WAGOLL 2 – Task 2 (making links)

‘Afternoons’ was written by Philip Larkin. He was an undergraduate at St Johns College Oxford where he wrote several works of fiction, verse and critical commentary under the pseudonym of Brunette Coleman. He worked as a librarian and died aged 63 of cancer.

‘Afternoons’ is a poem about how the cycle of life is linked with the cycle of nature and maybe even the cycle of a day. This is shown in the sense that the young mothers in the poem have lost their freedom and yet the children have theirs. The mothers are now ruled by the domestic chores that are required by the children. This is backed up by the lines in the poem “Finding more unripe acorns, expect to be taken home”. The children are expecting to take the acorns home just as there are expecting the mothers to set aside their lives to make room for their children’s. Another example of this is a line near the start of the poem that says “Young mothers assemble”. The fact that the author used the word assemble makes being a mother seem like more of a job or a duty rather than something beautiful. As well as this the second stanza talks about how the wedding tapes have been dumped near the television. This shows that maybe one of the most important moments of a couple’s life has just been dropped off at the closest place it can be left.

In both ‘To Autumn’ and ‘Afternoons’ time seems to flow at different paces. In ‘To Autumn’ time seems to flow at a very fast pace, as each season turns into the next there’s never a break in-between. In Keat’s poem time seems to be quickly leading him to death, summer turned into autumn far too quickly and winter is also quickly approaching. As if he knows that he won’t make it to spring, as each season morphs into the next, there is no time to just enjoy life when death is quickly approaching. In ‘Afternoons’ however, time seems to flow too slowly as each day seems to be the same. The constant cycle of doing housework and looking after children makes each day seem the same, making time seem like its flowing slowly. Yet the past seems to be so far away, the past where the mothers were happy, lost in love, that time seemed like just a dream yet there is that constant reminder of the photo album that almost seems to taunt them.

Also in both poems, their lives seems not to be their own, In ‘To Autumn’ death is the inevitable, his life is no longer his own, his life belongs in the hands of God where it has been decided that he’ll die, that there’s no way in preventing the matter. In ‘Afternoon’s’ however, the mother’s lives are not in their own control. Their lives which used to be full of freedom, each day a new adventure, of youth, is now in control of their children. The expectations of society, their children and husbands seem to bind them, their control of their lives gone as they have responsibility of another life.

As well as this ‘To Autumn’ spans over a whole seasons whereas ‘Afternoons’ is more concentrated. Not only this but Keat’s poem uses a more formal structure, using rhymes and rhythm as an ode would whereas Larkin’s poem is less structure. Also ‘To Autumn’ is much more nature orientated, whereas ‘Afternoons’ focuses more on people.