Literary Analysis: The Second Blush - Molly Peacock

_The Second Blush_ by Molly Peacock is a beautiful book of poetry that focuses primarily on the themes of love and loss. It is filled with medium-length sonnets, which were not difficult to read in the slightest. This book of poetry can be seen as relatable to a younger audience such as those going on early adulthood, with her themes of love, lust and teen trials. I was able to dive into the bizarre thoughts of a woman. Molly Peacock seduces the reader with romantic influences, and charismatic word play as she gives away the answers to every story she tells.

The poem called “Faraway” is one that shares a background story of the author, and the trials that she is going through in the current. Here, Molly Peacock has a husband who is very ill, and in the poem it exposed the emotions she would have if she ever lost him. This sonnet is a representation for the other poems in the book; Peacock would often talk about the “what ifs” of life, and “Faraway” showed that in full force. From the first stanza she spoke on how she will never give up on her husband, but closer to the end she showed that she was still doubtful about how long he has to live:

I could lose you, but I haven’t so far.

I might amuse you, but I daren’t, so far.

I would could confuse you, but I won’t, so far.
Would I refuse you? No, I say. (Peacock 1.5)

In *The Second Blush*, there are poems that share themes and structure from the Beat poets. Beat poetry had a structure that was mean to tie into the theme of their poem. For example, the poem "Constantly Risking Absurdity" by Lawrence Ferlinghetti was about a poet that was watched by public critics as if the poet is walking on a tightrope (they were waiting for his fall). The structure of the poem looked like someone was walking on a tightrope the way the lines were layered.

*the poet like an acrobat*

*climbs on rime*

*to a high wire of his own making*

*and balancing on eyebeams*

*above a sea of faces*

*paces his way* (Ferlinghetti 1.5)

Molly Peacock would also structure her poems in similar ways, because it made for a stronger theme. For example in "Faraway", it seems like the poem is falling apart, when in reality it is a way of bringing all of the elements of the poem together.

*we dive under it contours, everything blurs,*

*then you drop a clue,*

*and the land reshapes*

*I pick it up and we pull through,*

*so far.* (Peacock 1.5)
This structure works with the theme of this poem because it is talking about the possibility of her marriage falling apart. As the words are moving further and further apart, it is symbolizing how her and her husband are drifting. The poem still remains together, so it shows how she is still going to hold on to matter what. This structure gives more to the poem than just what you are reading; structure allows you to see a background story as well as an emotional connection.

In addition to the themes, I noticed some influences from other movements as well. Though this book is fairly new I noticed old influences from the Romantic Movement. Romanticism really focused on the idea of using imagination, sharing it in works, and they also focused on the power of the individual (sharing one's thoughts, and understanding that different people have different understandings). Romanticism reflects on the beauty and appreciation of nature without the need for understanding, and it is from an internal perspective. *The Second Blush* was a venue for Molly Peacock to let her imagination run wild. You could tell this was all from her perspective because she mentions that she denies all kinds of reader's intelligence. Peacock does not want people to figure out a different conclusion from the one she intended for; she tells her story the way it is, and that is all.

Peacock would often talk about love and nature in a sense that she was observing it, and taking it for what it was. She mentioned that she never wanted the reader to think that she is taking some greater meaning, or trying to find another perspective to what she was speaking about. She also upholds the power of the individual because it would only mention her point of view and her own thoughts. In the poem "Cliffs of Mistake" Peacock showed her individuality by expressing her own
feelings, and she also made it universal at the same time. This poem expressed her ideas on how impactful the mistakes we make are on our lives. This almost showed another side of her, because she sounded as if she was regretting aspects of life instead of embracing them:

    To know you’re making a mistake as
    you make it, yet not be able to stop,
    is to step off a cliff, expecting to scramble
    backwards and up through the air to stand
    on the outcrop you stepped from (Molly I.5)

Peacock often reflected on her own feeling about love, and loss without worrying about the feelings of the reader. She writes in a way that persuades you into having the same perspective she does. Though most of her poetry seemed to be influenced by the Romantic Movement, she also had elements from the Classical movement as well. In class we have spoken before about Classicism and how those poets used the universal theme of “common sense”. The thought that you could take a theme that didn't make sense at first, and turn it into something that can be understood. They would also write poetry that was structured in a way that was easy to read, and it would also have the proper diction and punctuation; this theme was blended into The Second Blush.

    Overall this book is very enjoyable, and it made me fall in love with the theme of love. Though it appeared to be selfish what Molly Peacock would not allow the reader to
draw out my own emotions, it turned out to be a brilliant move. She showed me her style, her individual influences, and she gave insight on herself as a woman. I would recommend this book to men and women that are confused about using "individuality" in their poetry. Her coy poetry was definitely compelling to me, and I do believe that I will give another one of her works a read.
Works Cited


Non Teacher Spokes Person

To obtain money, happiness or to lack
To be taught you have to love one thing
Keep moving forward
And to never look back

A 4.0 with evidence of doing fine
Compared to jersey #22 means
He is the one with the "Bright Future"
One ten times brighter than mine

A place where names might as well be numbers
Diverse personalities are bomb threats
Learning is the biggest form of irony here
And I'm still not sure if I can talk about religion yet

Teachers with interests absent from class
Too busy focused on the second Friday
While attendees witness their precious minds rot
For the sake of dead people on paper
You feed us rubbish and you call yourselves educators
Only able to think with our uniform minds
We fight for a future we've never even seen

Were "building you're character"
Showing you how to work hard
For something even WE stopped caring about
You are the one in high demand
YOU ARE what the world needs
We all want the best for you
And yes we are "Just saying that"

So you make a mockery of Graduation
We the "DiCaprio at the Oscars"
Dressed in our "one time" gowns
Your cardboard hats
As you move our lips to your plagiarized tune

So I suppose I get what I paid for
Considering it came free
While you pity the future I now have
The one you paved for me

You've finally made a breakthrough
Your purpose summed in one cry
"3 years of middle
4 in high
12 years of higher
Then work til' you die"
Revenge by Letitia Elizabeth Landon

"Ay, gaze upon her rose-wreathed hair,
   And gaze upon her smile;
Seem as you drank the very air
   Her breath perfumed the while:

And wake for her the gifted line,
   That wild and witching lay,
And swear your heart is as a shrine,
   That only owns her sway.

'Tis well: I am revenged at last,—
   Mark you that scornful cheek,—
The eye averted as you pass'd,
Spoke more than words could speak.

Ay, now by all the bitter tears
   That I have shed for thee,—
The racking doubts, the burning fears,—
Avenged they well may be—

By the nights pass'd in sleepless care,
   The days of endless woe;
All that you taught my heart to bear,
All that yourself will know.
I would not wish to see you laid
   Within an early tomb;
I should forget how you betray'd,
   And only weep your doom:

But this is fitting punishment,
   To live and love in vain,—
Oh my wrung heart, be thou content,
   And feed upon his pain.

Go thou and watch her lightest sigh,—
   Thine own it will not be;
And bask beneath her sunny eye,—
   It will not turn on thee.

'Tis well: the rack, the chain, the wheel,
   Far better hadst thou proved;
Ev'n I could almost pity feel,
   For thou art nor beloved."

The poem I chose is called “Revenge” by Letitia E. Landon, and I chose it because it expresses the thoughts that many women have had. Letitia E. Landon was apart of the Romantic
movement, and shared these romantic themes throughout her poetry. The theme that is given off
to me in this poem is “lost love” and also (like the title) “revenge”. I like that style of this poem
because of the fact that it shares the elements of both the Classical and the Romantic movement;
this piece shared the clarity, order and the balance that a poem in the classical movement would
have had. This is because it has a very evident rhyme scheme, it is somewhat lyrically structured
and it has nine organized stanzas; these elements make the poem easy for the reader to
understand and entertaining. On the contrary, the poem is very internal because it is in the mind
of the main speaker, and it allows you to read the thoughts and the opinions of the individual.
This poem was written in the 1800s and it has evidence of emotions and feelings in it, which also
leads me to believe that it is a part of the romantic era.

As I dive into the poem, I notice that it begins with a woman talking about a man
observing and analyzing the features of another lady. She mentions how he gazes upon her
beautiful hair, smile and even likes the way that she breathes, but it seems to me that she is not
pleased with his actions. She says this with ill intentions because she is speaking about a man
that left her for another woman, and she is out for revenge. In the third and fourth stanza she
leads me to believe that she used to love this man, but he now has eyes for another woman and
she wants him to pay. The only problem is that this “new mistress” is not even interested in him.
In the fifth stanza, it is clear that this man has lead on the first woman, and she hopes that he will
soon feel the hurt that he has caused her. Since his new lover wont even give him the time of
day, he will finally see what it is like to be unloved (that will be his punishment).

In the sixth stanza, The “main woman” says that does not wish the man would die,
because she would only miss him and wish that he would come back. Instead, she hopes to watch
while he tirelessly chases after his new found lover in vain; she will enjoy seeing his heart crush
from a woman that will NEVER love him. It seems to me that she is over wasting her time on this man, and cares more to see him pay for what he did to her. She knows that the beautiful woman will never turn her eye upon him nor will she even acknowledge him, but she wants to watch him die trying to get her attention. In the last stanza, she says that she almost has pity for this “unloved” man, because she believes that he made a huge mistake.

This poem was very emotional and is dealing with romantic themes, but throughout the Letitia London’s poem, she was trying to understand why her lover left her. The poem does not show the logic and reasoning that a classical poem would, but it does fit into the classical structure of a poem. This poem is very romantic even though it is not about “gaining love”. Because of the fact that you can see the emotions, thoughts, and feelings of the individual... it would be considered a romantic poem.
Works Cited

Lit2030
M/W 9:30 am

Critical Response II

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening - Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village, though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake

The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound's the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,

But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

For this critical response I chose the work “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” by Robert Frost because this was one of the first poems that stuck in my head in English class. It actually has a nice message/lesson to it, and it seems easy to comprehend. The poem begins with a man that is traveling through the woods and he spots, and he notices a house that is in a village. This house looks very familiar to him, but he knows that he will not be there long enough for the person in the house to see him because he has to keep moving. In the cold of the winter, the horse thinks that it is odd for them to stop in the snow when they have not found any kind of shelter.

The horse makes a bit of noise to make sure that the rider is alright, because stopping in the middle of nowhere is out of the ordinary for them. The snow is coming down faster, and the wind is all the more cold so there is no time for them to stay and rest. The rider admires the beautiful nature around him, because he mentions that the woods are “[…] lovely, dark, and deep”, but he has no time to keep looking around. The rider had things to do, places to be, and promises to keep; this is why he reminds himself “And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep.”

I believe the message here was saying that in life there is a time and a place for everything. You have a time for enjoying the beautiful elements of life around you, and there is also a time where you have to keep moving towards your goals in life. This poem speaks to me because it is telling me that you cannot rest until the job at hand is complete. In the line “And miles to go before I sleep”, I don’t believe he was talking about an actual “rest”, but I think it was touching on the subject of death. During a second read, I believe Frost is telling us that we all have some job or work to do before we die, and you must get it done before then.
Thus Beelzebub Pleadeth his devilish Counsel, first devis'd

By Satan, and in part propos'd: for whence, [ 380 ]

But from the Author of all ill could

Spring So deep a malice, to confound the race

Of mankind in one root, and Earth with

Hell To mingle and involve, done all to spite The great Creatour?

But thir spite still serves [ 385 ]

His glory to augment. The bold design

Pleas'd highly those infernal States, and joy

Sparkl'd in all thir eyes; with full assent

They vote: whereat his speech he thus renewes.

(Milton 2.379-389)
Work Cited

This poem fits nicely within the Modernist view because all of the information that you need is inside the poem itself. It has a universal theme to it where it would not be directed towards a particular audience (High art vs. Low art), but instead a poem to inform the public in general. It also allows us to get inside the mind of the individual, and see what they are seeing without any bias or any opposing opinions. I enjoyed this poem, and I wouldn't hesitate to read more poetry by Robert Frost.